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EDITORIAL

Phone +44 (0)20 7738 5454
Email hattie.butterworth@markallengroup.com
Editor Hattie Butterworth
Associate Editor Helena Matheopoulos
Consultant Editor Keith Clarke
Contributing Editors Francis Muzzu, Tom Sutcliffe
Robert Thicknesse (UK), Francis Carlin (France),
James Imam (Italy), Karyl Charna Lynn (USA),
Andrew Mellor (Scandinavia), Ken Smith (Far East)
Design Daniela DiPadova, Louise Wood

ADVERTISING

Phone +44 (0)20 7333 1716
Title Manager Liam-Rhys Jones,
liam.jones@markallengroup.com
Advertising Production Daniela DiPadova,
+44 (0)20 7333 1727, daniela.dipadova@markallengroup.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND BACK ISSUES

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Subscriptions Manager Bethany Foy
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PUBLISHING

Phone +44(0)20 7738 5454
Commercial Manager Esther Zuke
Marketing & Events Director Tony Hill
Head of Marketing John Barnett
Group Institutional Sales Manager Jas Atwal
Production Director Richard Hamshere
Circulation Director Sally Boettcher
Editorial Director Martin Cullingford
Managing Director Paul Geoghegan
Chief Executive Officer Ben Allen
Chairman Mark Allen

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Does identity compromise music?

When it comes to the life of a performer, it's often been accepted that life on- and off-stage are to be kept separate. Does the audience need to know about personal experiences, identities and opinions of performers? Is it compromising the music if we make space for singers to express their own identities?

Our world is becoming ever-squeezed of artistic funding and resources. The boom of the internet and increased pace of life has knock-on effects, leading often to burn-out and mental health struggles of creatives. Touring, gruelling rehearsal schedules and physical health struggles all take their toll.

If we ask artists to keep personal identities hidden, is the singer able to perform and live freely, or is there always an element of restriction? This issue of *Opera Now* looks at identity and how singers, conductors and directors are making it part of their artistic vocation to celebrate and campaign for individuality.

Our cover story with Greek National Opera meets a company asking its audience to consider identity through new commissions on its alternative stage. Although holding complex connotations, these questions of gender and trans experience aren't going away, and the arts has a role to play in portraying the reality, asking questions of its audience.

In July, Pride month celebrations continue in London. We speak to Elgan Llŷr Thomas ahead of the release of his album, *Unveiled*, looking into homosexual experiences through songs by LGBTQ+ composers and poets. We also talk to two American tenors in this month's pages: Davóne Tines speaks about the Barbican's Classical Pride concert, and Brian Jagde, soon to take on the role of Don Carlos at Covent Garden, opens up about the importance of therapy in supporting his career and prioritising psychological wellbeing.

Opera is a brilliant, yet complex profession. It is a sign of our ever-opening society that so many are willing to bring music along with vulnerability, connecting more fully with an audience who share many of the same experiences.

Hattie Butterworth

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Opera Now captures the drama, colour and vitality of one of the most powerful of all the performing arts. In our print and digital issues, we showcase the creative spirit of opera, both on stage and behind the scenes, with profiles of opera companies, singers, directors and designers. Our in-depth features reflect how diverse cultural elements have influenced opera, including travel, history, literature, art, architecture, politics and philosophy.

Our lively reviews and opinion pages are a platform for writers and critics drawn from all over the world. Our aim is to inspire our opera-loving readers to broaden their knowledge and deepen their passion for this fascinating and stimulating artform.

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Teatro Donizetti, 17, 25 November, 3 December
Il diluvio universale
Music by **Gaetano Donizetti**
Conductor **Riccardo Frizza**
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Visual dramaturgy **Mariano Furlani**

Teatro Sociale, 18, 26 November, 1 December
Lucie de Lammermoor
Music by **Gaetano Donizetti**
Conductor **Pierre Dumoussaud**
Director **Jacopo Spirei**

Teatro Donizetti, 19 and 24 November
Alfredo il Grande
Music by **Gaetano Donizetti**
Conductor **Corrado Rovaris**
Director **Stefano Simone Pintor**

Teatro Donizetti, 2 December
Il piccolo compositore di musica
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'We are setting an example of acceptance and inclusion, so far absent from other national Greek stages'

ANDREAS SIMOPOULOS

NOAH MORRISON

GRADE MEDIA

RIKIMARU HOTTA/NEW NATIONAL THEATRE, TOKYO

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ALYS ROBERTS

Soprano

We catch up with the young soprano ahead of *Out of Her Mouth* at the Spitalfields Festival

Can you remember a specific moment when you knew you wanted to be a musician? What was your road into opera?
I grew up singing Welsh folk songs, cerdd dant [vocal improvisation] and 'unawdau' [solos] at eisteddfodau, so music played a big part in my life, but a career as a musician just didn't really ever occur to me. 'Opera singer' was never an option in the Careers for Wales drop-down list at school, and my only point of reference for a real life opera singer was Bryn Terfel (whose father sang in the same male voice choir as my late father). I was bribed into auditioning for the opera society in the freshers' fair at university by the promise of a cupcake and everything after that has been a lucky accident.

What about a singer's life do you wish audiences knew?
We are scared. In our current cultural climate, work opportunities for singers are rapidly reducing and a great number of us are being forced to leave the profession. The singers that audiences see on the stage make up a tiny cross section of the industry – we are the lucky ones.

What can you tell us about the tour of *Out of Her Mouth*?
Out of Her Mouth is a set of three biblical cantatas by Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, translated by Toria Banks for Hera, Mahogany Opera and the Dunedin Consort. Written by a woman, for women and about women, they are tiny operas in all but name, about love, marriage, tragedy and adultery. I'll be singing alongside Carolyn Sampson and Anna Dennis, and working with director Mathilde López. As a neurodivergent performer, it's wonderful to be involved in a project that has accessibility and diversity at its heart, for the performers and the audience members alike.

What else is coming up for you?
I'm currently working for Longborough Festival Opera as an emerging artist in their production of *The Fairy Queen*, as well as singing Yum Yum in *The Mikado* for Charles Court Opera. After that, fingers crossed. **ON**

Out of Her Mouth *will be at Spitalfields Music Festival on 9 July as part of a wider tour (23 June - 12 July, www.wearehera.co.uk/out-of-her-mouth)*

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WHAT'S HAPPENING AND COMING UP IN THE OPERA WORLD

NEWS & NOTES

Composer Kaija Saariaho dies aged 70

ANDREW CAMPBELL

The Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho has died at the age of 70. In a statement issued by her family on 2 June, her death was explained to be the result of glioblastoma, an aggressive type of brain cancer which she had treated in private to 'maintain a positive mindset and keep the focus on her work.'

Kaija Saariaho (*b*1952 in Helsinki) was one of the foremost women composers on the planet and one of the leading creative figures of her generation transcending gender; a truly original artist with a very distinctive musical style and personal voice, developed and refined over decades.

She studied with Heininen at the Sibelius Academy, with other members of a miraculous generation of Finnish composers including Esa-Pekka Salonen and Magnus Lindberg; equally formative influences were Tristan Murail and Gérard Grisey, the principal exponents of spectral music. Although she made an initial breakthrough with the orchestral *Verblendungen* (1984), it was with her dazzling, enchanting nonet-with-electronics *Lichtbogen* ('Arches of Light', 1986) that she burst onto the wider scene. Its ethereal, hypnotic textures were inspired by the aurora borealis, and the use of electronics proved prophetic for her future career.

Building on the success of *Lichtbogen*, Saariaho composed a further 100-plus works for the widest variety of forces, from full-scale opera to instrumental solos. Yet Saariaho fought shy of many of the standard Classical forms, such as sonata, symphony, trio and quartet. Even in her concertos, the one conventional genre she cultivated, the inner structures are highly unconventional, each work deriving its form from particular sound combinations or the nature of the instruments being written for (including the human voice).

The apex of her output, however, is undoubtedly her operas, starting in 2000 with *L'amour de loin*, a powerful and mesmerising tale of unrequited, chivalric love set during the Crusades. Saariaho said of *L'amour*: 'Everything I had written up to that moment was in that piece. All the material, my approach to harmony, to texture – all of it was there. And so after the opera, I somehow felt that I was starting again.'

Operas that followed, *Adriana mater* (2005) *Le passion de Simone* (2006) and *Emilie* (2008), refined her operatic sensibilities further, leading to *Only the Sounds Remain* (2015) and the most recent *Innocence* (2018), the harrowing story of a school shooting, which received its London premiere in April of this year.

Conductor of *Innocence*, Susanna Mälkki wrote of Saariaho in the *New York Times*: 'Through genuine fearlessness and honesty, she restored many people's belief in opera as art form... It is impossible to imagine the world - the music world or my own life - without Kaija. But her presence is with us in her art. What helps now, in the grief, is the inner light present in her works, which we will now keep carrying forward, always moving toward the light.'

Gustavo Dudamel to leave Paris Opéra

DANNY CLINCH

Gustavo Dudamel has announced his resignation from the role of music director at the Paris Opéra. He leaves his position with the company in August, just two years into an intended six-year tenure, to spend more time with family.

In a statement released to the press on Thursday 25 May, Dudamel said: 'It is with a heavy heart and after long consideration that I announce my resignation in order to spend more time with my family.'

'I have no plans other than to be with my loved ones, to whom I am deeply grateful for helping me to continue to be strong in my resolve to grow and remain challenged, both personally and artistically, each and every day.'

The announcement from Dudamel comes following the news in February of his appointment as the next music and artistic director of the New York Philharmonic. His contract with the orchestra begins with the 2026-27 season, when he will in turn depart his other current post as music director of the Los Angeles Philarmonic.

In memoriam: Kathryn Harries

The opera singer and former Director of National Opera Studio Kathryn Harries has died from cancer aged 72.

Many across the industry remember Kathryn both through her career as a soprano, but also for her extensive charity work and dedication to the development of young singers.

Richard Mantle, General Director of Opera North wrote on behalf of the National Opera Studio about Kathryn's extraordinary commitment: 'It is with enormous sadness that we learn of the death of Kathryn Harries and we mourn the loss of a dear friend, colleague and artist. She led the National Opera Studio as our Director from 2008 until 2017.

'Kathryn was a consummate artist and enjoyed wonderful career, performing with all the major UK opera companies, having made her debut in *Fidelio* with WNO in 1983. It was in 1985 that I first met her when she created the role of Hedda Gabler at Scottish Opera returning to the company in 1990 as a triumphant Didon in *Les Troyens* and one of her final performances was as Kostelnicka in *Jenufa* again for Scottish Opera.

'As Director of the National Opera Studio she transformed the training programme, including the intensive study of core roles and she was at pains to put musicianship at the heart of her curriculum. During her time at the Studio, Kathryn was able to share and impart her incredible experience as a distinguished performer which has enabled so many young artists to embark on their careers and to meet the constantly challenging demands of our profession.

'As an artist, all of us in the opera profession are privileged to have known and worked with Kathryn and her contribution will live long not only in our memory but in the careers of so many singers.'

Oliver Mears, Director of Opera at the Royal Opera House also reflected: 'I first got to know Kathryn Harries properly when she offered me work as a director at the National Opera Studio. It was typical of her generosity that she took a chance on someone she only knew from one previous project, The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant, where she gave a scintillating performance as Petra's mother. As I worked with two NOS intakes on staged scenes, she was always warmly enthusiastic and supportive, while I was struck by the genuine affection the students had for her. She inspired them because she had lived the life they aspired towards – that of a top-level international opera singer - and therefore could offer them the best kind of advice and encouragement. Later, when I was Artistic Director of Northern Ireland Opera, I asked Kathryn to be involved with our Young Artists and Festival at Glenarm. I will always remember the patient dedication of her work with talented Irish young singers in that tiny place on the north coast of the island, mining the text of lieder and arias for meaning and emotion. There was no one quite like Kathryn and we will all hugely miss her talent, courage and inspiration.'

IAN EHM

Royal Opera House names principal guest conductor

Italian conductor Speranza Scappucci is to become principal guest conductor of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden – the first to hold the title in over 25 years.

50 year-old Scappucci will commence the post at the start of the 2025/26 season, together with the incoming music director, Czech conductor Jakub Hrůša.

The appointment comes following her ROH debut with Verdi's *Attila* last July, as well as making history becoming the first woman to conduct a new production at La Scala in 2022. Until last year, Scappucci was music director of Opéra Royal de Wallonie-Liège in Belgium and has conducted productions at Scottish Opera, LA Opera, Washington National Opera, Vienna State Opera and Opera di Roma.

Beginning her career as pianist and répétiteur, Scappucci studied piano at the Conservatorio di Musica Santa Cecilia and then trained as a répétiteur at the Juilliard School in New York. From 2001-2006 she worked as a répétiteur at the Glyndebourne Festival, followed by the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Santa Fe Opera.

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News in Brief

Leeds Lieder Festival has announced that it was unsucessful in its application for a grant from the Arts Council England to support the 2023 festival, which ran from 9-17 June. The Leeds-based charity, founded in 2004 and directed by pianist Joseph Middleton, failed to secure a 'vital' £60,000 after many years of support from ACE, leaving it 'severely depleted' of funds.

Greek mezzo-soprano Alexandra Achillea Pouta has won the Guildhall School of Music & Drama's 2023 Gold Medal competition. The final on 10 May also saw performances by finalists soprano Miku Yasukawa, baritone Michael Lafferty-Smith and soprano Lorna McLean. Since 1950 the Guildhall Gold Medal Award has been open to singers and instrumentalists in alternate years.

22-year-old Korean baritone Taehan Kim has won the 2023 Queen Elisabeth Voice Competition. Kim, in receipt of the Belgian competiton's first prize of €25,000, is currently studying at the College of Music of Seoul National University. The second prize of €20,000 went to American mezzo soprano Jasmin White.

Opera Now launches a new website in affiliation with Gramophone. Discoverable at www.gramophone.co.uk/opera-now, the development comes as part of the bringing together of Opera Now, International Piano and Choir & Organ magazines with Gramophone to become 'Gramophone Publications' within the Mark Allen Group.

Note: Opera Now regrets printing the incorrect name of the soprano in the Royal College of Music's production of Ravel's L'Enfant et les sortilèges in the June issue. 'The Boy' was performed by Lexie Moon, and not Charlotte Clapperton as the review stated.

Letters

Write to the Editor: hattie.butterworth@markallengroup.com

Opera in Châteaux

Simon Mundy in 'Summer Festivals' (June issue) wrote that 'opera in and around châteaux has never caught on much in France.' He's right that the English love of country house opera isn't reflected in France, partly because there are so many – about 30 – opera houses in all the bigger cities – from Aix to Vichy. But in addition to Baugé, there is also opera at La Basse Passière near Le Mans, as well as Opera Loki who performed in several chateaux for nigh on 20 years, advancing the careers and showcasing the talents of younger singers; and bowing out with *Tosca* last summer. This year, Regents Opera will be touring *Cosi fan Tutte* in châteaux in the Auvergne and Burgundy. But Baugé, La Basse Passire, Opera Loki and Regents Opera are, I think, all run by Brits. **Peter Bear**

IN OperaNow
AUGUST 2023

ON SALE 25 JULY

BREE ANNIE CLOWDUS

JAMIE BARTON

Since winning BBC Cardiff Singer of the World in 2013, American mezzo soprano Jamie Barton has gone on to achieve international acclaim, most recently appearing in *Il trovatore* at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. We speak to her about identity, individuality and carving a unique career within the current opera landscape

ALSO...

- We preview Opera Philadelphia's *10 Days in a Madhouse*, meeting composer Rene Orth to speak about portraying mental health in contemporary opera
- Our USA focus continues with a profile on bass-baritone Ryan McKinny and his extraordinary career ahead of the Met's production of Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*
- USA opera, then and now - mapping the fascinating history of opera in the US, including the rise of contemporary works and new commissions
- We review the Met's *Die Zauberflöte*, San Francisco Opera's *Die Frau ohne Schatten* and Glyndebourne's *Don Giovanni*

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Transcending national, cultural and religious barriers – founding Ulster Touring Opera

By Dafydd Hall Williams

MONIKA RITTERSHAUS

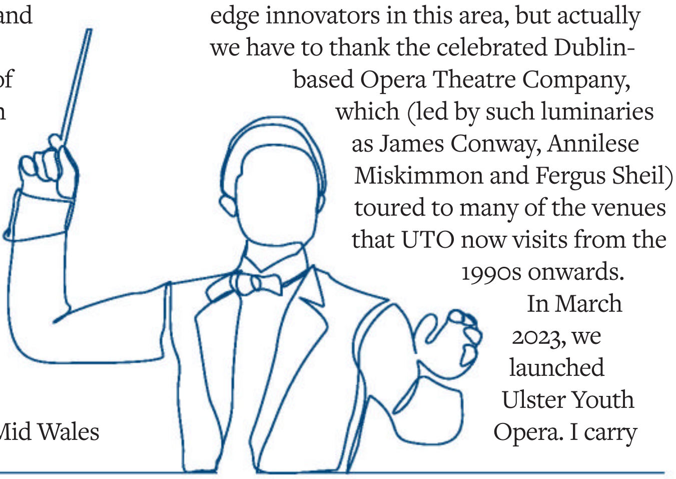
After setting the stage for the orchestra, I and the other members of the local crew were lounging on the grass overlooking the River Dee, waiting for the performance to finish. It was July 2008 and I was a volunteer at the International Eisteddfod in my hometown of Llangollen in Wales. That stage has seen a fabulous range of artists tread its boards – including in 1955 a young trainee teacher who visited as part of the Chorus Rossini from Modena. When Luciano Pavarotti returned to perform in 1995, I was too young to know I was living through an historic moment.

As I sat and watched the relay of Elin Manahan Thomas singing 'Mein Herr Marquis' from *Die Fledermaus* with Welsh National Opera, I had one of those lightbulb moments, and I was hooked. Fast-forward 15 years, and I now run Ulster Touring Opera, which I founded in 2019. The company's mission is to increase access to opera through cross-border touring, educational projects and immersive technology: quite a cocktail, but they all share the same goal, to ignite similar lightbulb moments for people in Ireland.

Before I moved to Belfast, I had assumed that Ulster and Northern Ireland were the same thing. Helped along by some wry comments which characterise the humour here, I was corrected: the province of Ulster comprises nine counties, six of which are Northern Ireland and three (Cavan, Donegal, and Monaghan) in the Republic of Ireland. I moved to Northern Ireland in 2018 to start a year-long project with Northern Ireland Opera, the national opera company, which performs mostly in Belfast. Having cut my teeth as a staff director with companies such as English Touring Opera and Mid Wales Opera, I saw the potential for a company providing fully-staged, core-repertoire opera at some of the towns beyond Belfast which have excellent medium-size venues. I knew the impact that live opera can have as part of local programming, and I had fallen in love with the intimacy of these venues.

In 2020 I held a range of meetings with venues across the province of Ulster to gauge their interest in receiving opera productions – and the response was overwhelmingly supportive. Stage One complete... now for the small matter of setting up a company and finding enough funding to make and tour the productions. Without the initial response from the venues, and their subsequent support for UTO as a fledgling company, we would not be where we are. Our hurdles included both the global challenges of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, plus challenges closer to home such as the collapse of the Northern Ireland executive in May 2022. In spite of these, UTO built on its 2022 *A Night at the Opera* concert tour to mount its first full production in spring 2023, Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*. Next spring we will be following the adventures of the eponymous barber in a production of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*.

What does it mean to be a cross-border company - whether geographically, demographically or technologically? I would love to say that we are bleeding-edge innovators in this area, but actually we have to thank the celebrated Dublin-based Opera Theatre Company, which (led by such luminaries as James Conway, Annilese Miskimmon and Fergus Sheil) toured to many of the venues that UTO now visits from the 1990s onwards.



In March 2023, we launched Ulster Youth Opera. I carry my experiences of the Welsh National Youth Opera with me in my profession, and when I founded UTO I knew that I wanted to bring a youth programme to Northern Ireland. The future of Ulster Youth Opera beyond 2023 is currently uncertain, owing to current suspension of the Stormont executive and the uncertainty that causes. Nonetheless, we will continue to champion the development of young talent across the province.

Finally, there is the immersive technology area of the company. This is the part where people's eyes glaze over while I attempt to describe how opera holograms will change the way we engage with art. At its heart, our exploration of technologies such as 'augmented reality' and 'volumetric capture' come from the same place as live touring and workshops for young performers: increasing access to opera. We started exploring augmented reality (AR) opera in January 2020, filming opera singers in 360° to create 3D versions which can be viewed on a phone or tablet. Regardless of whether this technology will become an important way to share opera in the future, it is vital that artists are the ones to drive the technology, and not vice versa.

We live in a time where support for our sector across the UK is under threat, exacerbated in Northern Ireland by a lack of political leadership. It is up to opera companies to harness what means we have to ensure that, not only are audiences served, but also that the young people who will become the decision-makers of the future have a better understanding of the value of opera. **ON**

Prompter

In an age that puts emotions above facts, is it time to put the brakes on our intellectual superiority when talking about opera?

By Andrew Mellor

R T DUNPHY

MONIKA RITTERSHAUS

I write this column on a train hurtling up Sweden's sunlit west coast. In a few hours I'll be seeing a new production of *Nabucco* at The Gothenburg Opera. I send a selfie to my dad via WhatsApp with the caption 'off to Nabucco.' A few seconds later, up pops his reply: 'Lovely. How long for?'

My dad knows *Nabucco* is an opera and not a Greek island. His reply conformed to a longstanding family joke. One afternoon in 1995 he was walking our dog when he encountered Geoff, a retired naval officer and our most erudite neighbour in a dingy neighborhood of Plymouth. 'We're off to *Nabucco* tonight,' my dad said as they each monitored their respective Golden Retriever. 'Lovely,' Geoff replied, 'how long for?'

Every time I've done the 'off to *Nabucco*' routine since - which is every time an opera company has staged *Nabucco* on my patch - I've pondered why we found Geoff's reply so funny. On the surface, our reaction was plain cruel: Geoff hadn't heard of *Nabucco* and so presumed it was a resort, which made us think him a fool - sneering and inexcusable by anyone's standards. Then again, there was something quite pretentious about Geoff, which rendered our hilarity almost (and I mean *almost*) fair game. If anyone on our street could have distinguished between a holiday destination and an Italian opera, it would have been Geoff. We'd discovered an unexpected chink in his intellectual armour.

A few years earlier, nobody in my family would have known what *Nabucco* was. I became obsessed with the opera and forced my parents to get us tickets to see it. Contrary to the usual way of things, my parents and I got to know opera in tandem. We discovered the repertory, slowly, at the same time. We saw our first *Figaro*s, our first *Traviata*s and our first *Nabucco*s together. We pronounced their titles incorrectly as a family.

For that reason, I can forgive my dad the joke and even laugh at it with him. Perhaps I find it funny because it says so much about opera's social awkwardness - the idea that many operagoers love nothing more than to flaunt their knowledge, but are faced with the frustration of opera looking for a new generation of ticket buyers who don't care much about the opinions of old bores like us.

The prospect of a new audience for opera apparently arouses as much disgust as optimism. We passionately believe in the art form, yet we often find it difficult to work out whether we want it to be for everyone or just for us, but with a select few additional invitees. The negative reaction to ENO inviting opera-curious celebrities to its opening nights has proved as much (ironically, those celebrities have since proved among ENO's most vociferous supporters).

In 2006, I spent a year on the opera jury of the Laurence Olivier Awards. I got to see every new production in London and would regularly discuss them with four other jurors, the youngest of whom was twice my age. I had a music degree, thought I knew the repertoire and believed I had valuable comments to make on its performance. But most of the time, I felt like Geoff. I'd hear words coming out of mouths and had no idea what language they were even in. I was expected to possess a vivid recall of performances that had taken place before I was born. I was mystified by the curious conversational dressage that passed for 'opera chat' and its pathological oscillation between swooning infatuation and outright disgust. I learned a lot, but I promised myself to try to think of opera in broader terms.

I don't think we're great at talking about opera to people who have a more ambivalent relationship with it than us - whose knowledge of it is more opaque and less obsessive. Often, the problem is that we're in too deep. We've become so embroiled in an all-consuming art form that we can't even see where the entry-points for other people might lie, let alone negotiate our way through them. In the end, we wind up sounding patronizing - or worse, like we're showboating. We obsess over little things like pronunciation. It doesn't take Freud to see the roots of that: a basic insecurity in the face of the sheer amount of language, history, knowledge and stylistic variation that opera encompasses.

We live a narcissistic age, one in which emotional reactions are increasingly afforded the status of informed, fact-based knowledge. That might be lamentable, even if it's historically not that new. But it does give us an opportunity to slip some intellectual moorings in certain social circumstances. I'm an opera critic when I write about a performance and I take the intellectual responsibility of that job seriously. When I watch an opera with a friend, family member or acquaintance, I am just as interested in the emotional response of that person as I am in my own. If those people have never seen or heard the opera being performed, their reactions are often even more wise and telling.

My dad, incidentally, had a good response to Geoff's 'how long for?' He creased with laughter while proffering a 'very good Geoff!' That let Geoff feel the comfort of being the clever one. If he wanted to know what *Nabucco* was, I'm sure he'd have found out in his own time. **ON**

@operalastnight

Beyond the opera in... Aix En Provence

By Fiona Hook

As the festival gets underway at Aix, we look beyond the concert stage to the beauty of this medieval city

Aix isn't just about the opera. It's a lovely little medieval town with plenty to see during the day, and all of it within walking distance. Be warned, though, Aix is seriously hot during festival time, with temperatures in the 80s. Although the golden stone buildings of the Old Town are high enough to provide shade, a hat and water bottle are advisable during the day. In the evening the air cools to a balmy loveliness that is a perfect accompaniment to open-air opera in the Archbishop's Palace, or for wandering the Old Town's compact network of golden stone streets in search of dinner or an aperitif.

You could start your day with coffee under the gigantic plane trees in Cours Mirabeau, southern France's stateliest avenue, and admire the 17th- and 18th-century mansions with the decorated fronts. Opposite number 38 with its balcony supported by two tired stone giants is the Deux Garçons cafe where Cézanne and Camus were regulars. The terrace is great for people-watching over a cocktail or *pression*. Or there's the smart La Rotonde at 2A Place Jeanne d'Arc, open until 1.30 am – perfect for a post-opera pitstop, and next to the taxi rank.

Turning left at the end of Cours Mirabeau up rue Thiers you will pass the neoclassical Palais de Justice and through a number of pretty squares, each with its own fountain, eventually come to the cathedral. St Sauveur has recycled pillars from Aix's Roman past, a sixth-century baptistry and a plethora of medieval art treasures, the most important of which is Froment's Burning Bush triptych. The Romanesque cloisters have lovely sculpted pillars, and the west doors are covered in 16th-century carved stone figures.

For more directed sightseeing, the vaulted rooms of Musée Granet in the former palace of the Knights of Malta house paintings by Cézanne, Rembrandt, Van Dyck and Giacometti, as well as sculpture and archeological remains from Aix's Roman and pre-Roman past. It is open 10-6 and shut on Mondays. A short walk away in Place Jean-Boyer is the Collection Planque, a 17th-century chapel with 300 19th- and 20th-century works from Van Gogh, Picasso and Dufy among others.

After culture, some retail therapy. On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, Place Richelme is taken up with stalls selling fruit, vegetables and local

The Old Town of Aix en Provence

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From top, clockwise: *Calissons are the local delicacy*

'Southern France's stateliest avenue': Cours Mirabeau

Cathedral of St Sauveur

specialities. More serious shoppers will head for Place Albertas and Rue Espariat, which are home to some of Aix's classiest boutiques.

Aix, is of course, permanently associated with Cézanne. Art lovers can visit his family home in Jas de Bouffan and the garden in which he painted. Further afield is his atelier, looking as if he'd only just left it. Both are booking-only. The views from the nearby Terrain des Peintres garden will be familiar to anyone who knows the artist's work. Rather more harrowing is the Camp des Milles, 10 minutes from the town centre by bus 4. The former tile works was southern France's major internment and deportation centre during World War II. There's an extensive exhibition over three floors, and it packs a powerful emotional punch.

In festival season it's worth booking accommodation well in advance. For blow-the-budget luxury, the Villa Gallici is a sumptuous historic mansion with extensive French-style gardens. Hôtel des Augustins is a converted medieval monastery just off Cours Mirabeau. The Hôtel des Quatre Dauphins, in the heart of the elegant Mazarin district, has pretty rooms furnished in typical Provençal style. Hôtel Paul in Avenue Pasteur is a pleasant budget find.

After sleep, food. Place Jeanne d'Arc is full of restaurants, all offering the Provençal specialism, steak tartare. If raw beef isn't your thing, there are plenty of other things to try, like choucroute, a cabbage and sausage stew, tarte tatin (apple tart), and soupe au pistou – vegetable soup with pasta. At Le Cintra the charming staff give you a free liqueur at the end. Further afield, at 5 Rue Campra, there's the imaginatively named Le Bistro. Despite the jokes on the menu they take food seriously here. The duck confit and *omelette norvégienne* (baked alaska flamed in Cointreau) are particularly nice, or you can have a lucky dip with the *plat du jour*, which never disappoints. It's a good idea to book, as it fills up quickly. If you would like something slightly more exotic, the small, family-run Le Jasmin in Rue de la Fonderie serves Persian food to a background of traditional Persian music.

From these, or anywhere, it's a short stroll to the Archbishop's Palace, the nerve centre of the festival. Operas start at 10pm here, allowing time for a leisurely dinner beforehand, and take place in the courtyard, with the audience watching on tiered seats. The atmosphere more than makes up for the lack of hi-tech effects, and a long interval provides an opportunity to nip to the bar just outside the gates. If you're in the area earlier, the Palace also has a Tapestry Museum. Performances also take place in the 430-seat Théâtre du Jeu de Paume, a sweet Rococo venue converted from a tennis court 300 years ago. There's no orchestra pit and the nearness of the musicians lends opera here a very intimate feeling.

The town is not only easy to get round, it is easy to get to. Ryanair and easyJet both fly to Marseilles, half an hour by shuttle to the bus station. The tourist office is just round the corner in Les Allées Provençales shopping centre which also boasts a number of interesting boutiques. As you go, glance at the enormous fountain in the Place de la Rotonde with its figures of Justice, Fine Arts and Agriculture.

For the souvenir hunter, *calissons* – candied fruit and ground almond paste topped with royal icing – are the local sweet. There's also a lovely soap shop at 4 Rue Gaston de Saporta, La Maison du Savon de Marseille, which proudly boasts outside that it doesn't pay tourist guides to stop. They have soap in every conceivable smell, including chocolate and peach, and of course, Provençal lavender. **ON**

Opera on *fire*

By Helena Matheopoulos

Since the appointment of Giorgos Koumendakis as its artistic director, the Greek National Opera has risen to heights of unprecedented scale. We discover the secret to its continued success

A day following the conversation in his office, the artistic director of Greek National Opera, Giorgos Koumendakis, was named Minister of Culture and Sports in the caretaker government, appointed to serve until the second round of General Elections on 25 June. The news has flustered his legion of admirers and fans of GNO, many of whom hope the appointment will remain temporary, as he himself affirms! On the other hand, the prospect of a long term Minister of Culture as visionary and effective as Koumendakis, is undeniably elating.

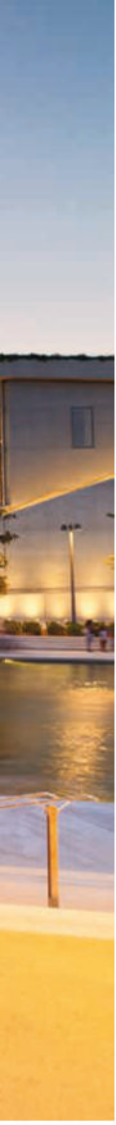
But whatever one's wishes, this prestigious appointment is a fitting tribute and a gesture of gratitude to the man responsible for one of the most remarkable operatic success stories of the past decade: the transformation and meteoric rise in quality and status of Athens' Greek National Opera.

Since its move to its new theatre at the impressive Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Centre (SNFCC), under Koumemdakis and his artistic and administrative team in 2017, GNO has become a universally admired and respected European theatre. The average age of its audience now stands at between 35 and 50, contrasting with over 60 before.

Koumendakis, also one of Greece's top and most prolific composers of more than 170 works, was responsible for the music of the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2004 Athens Olympic Games, and had been offered, and refused, the post of artistic director of GNO twice before. This was while the company was still at its old home at the Olympia Theatre – a converted cinema with limited stage facilities and potential.

'This time, in 2017, I accepted the offer because of the certainty that conditions at the GNO's new premises would enable me to develop an important, completely different creative environment,' Koumendakis tells me. 'When I took over, I looked at opera spherically, and thought about how an organisation such as ours could develop within these new premises in original, imaginative ways. I love *bel canto* and *verismo* very much, but they shouldn't monopolise our entire programming. I looked not only at opera, but at anything within the spirit and framework of music theatre in conjunction with all the other arts.

'Then I had to consider the social and educational aspects, part of the contribution expected from an



ADOBE STOCK/MILANGONDA

organisation such as the GNO, subsidised by the Ministry of Culture of successive governments. As there was no organised system designed to produce new artists or new audiences, I had to create one. This became the "Alternative Stage" (Enallaktiki Skini). It exists as an independent section within the GNO which has blossomed under its director, Alexandros Efklidis. The general plan was, and is, to put opera and music at the centre, with a simultaneous expansion into all the arts, alongside social and educational work.'

Even within the first two-and-a-half years, the performance quality had risen to international standards. Repertoire had become an exciting mix of popular classics and rarities (for the Greek public), while the buzz created by new commissions for the Alternative Stage engaged local talents into a zestful participation in the world of opera.

In recognition of its satisfaction with the quality of the GNO's creative output during the first season at its new home, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation stepped in with a further grant of €20 million at the middle of the second season, enabling the company to enter 'a new phase' in its artistic programming and a systematic drive towards the international exposure and promotion. International directors (such as Olivier Py for *Wozzeck* and Robert Wilson for *Otello*), arrived, followed by commissions of Greek artists and participation in co-productions; such as Marina Abramović's *The Seven Deaths of Maria Callas* with the Bavarian State Opera, Berlin's Deutsche Oper, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, The Teatro San Carlo and the Paris Opera.

After the pandemic came an original production titled *Inland*, which, as Koumendakis explains, was 'a new commission from Angelos Triantafyllou for singers from our learning and participation programmes, amateurs aged over 65, chosen after auditioning retired soloists and choristers all over Greece, plus some members of our own chorus and orchestra. This linked our own output and our social and educational contribution into an indistinguishable whole. The standard was such, that you couldn't distinguish the amateurs from the professionals!'

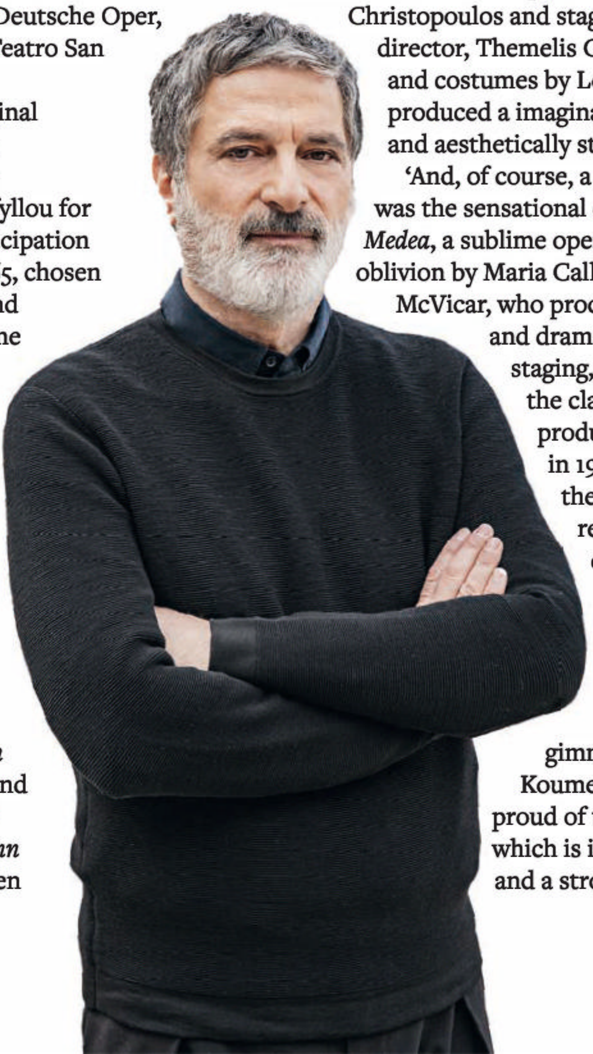
The current 2022/23 season featured a series of major international co-productions with top opera houses and festivals: *Don Giovanni* with Gothenburg Opera and the Danish Royal Opera; Krzysztof Warlikowski's *Les Contes d' Hoffmann* with Theatre de la Monnaie; Stephen Langridge's Glyndebourne production of *Falstaff* and David McVicar's *Medea*, (co-produced with the Metropolitan Opera, Chicago Lyric Opera and Canadian Opera), dedicated to Maria Callas on the 100th anniversary of her birth (there will also be two major exhibitions titled Unboxing Callas).

Among these, Koumendakis singles out *Falstaff*, *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* and *Medea* as the season's top achievements. 'I adore *Falstaff*, Verdi's last opera, which I consider a turning point in the development of opera at the time and the culmination of Verdi's creative output. It is staged less often than other Verdi operas, yet it is a hugely important masterpiece, a distillation of his life and work experience, which influenced European musical dramaturgy and future generations of composers with its mind-blowing harmonies, the thinking that went into its conception and orchestration, as well as the way Verdi uses the various voices. Stephen Langridge's production was an ideal staging of this work, with the director and the designer on exactly the same level of maturity and our own Dimitris Platanias producing a portrayal of the title role that stretched him both dramatically and emotionally.

'Equally important for the development of the musical language, in this case of the 20th century, is *Bluebeard's Castle*, and I consider our recent production one of the greatest moments in the GNO's history, near-perfect on all levels, musical, dramatic and visual: superbly conducted by Vassilis Christopoulos and staged by a young Greek director, Themelis Glynatsis, with sets and costumes by Leslie Travers, who produced a imaginative, totally original and aesthetically stunning installation.

'And, of course, a major highlight was the sensational co-production of *Medea*, a sublime opera rescued from total oblivion by Maria Callas, staged by David McVicar, who produced a visually and dramatically amazing staging, totally different from the classically "Greek" production at Epidaurus in 1961, with Callas in the title role. McVicar rediscovered the quintessence of Euripides' work in a most original, visually stunning, generous depiction without any gimmicks along the way.'

Koumendakis is equally proud of the Alternative Stage, which is immensely popular and a strong creative stimulant >



ANDREAS SIMOPOULOS

GNO artistic director Giorgos Koumendakis

ANDREAS SIMOPOULOS

ANDREAS SIMOPOULOS

Top: Sir David McVicar's production of Medea *is among Koumendakis' proudest achievements*

Bottom: The Alternative Stage production of Paraskakis' opera Strella *brought conversations around gender identity to the Greek stage*

for composers, playwrights and performers. He proudly highlights this season's staging of the controversial opera *Strella* by Michalis Paraskakis, based on Panos Koutras's eponymous film, as one of its most important achievements. 'For various reasons, I consider *Strella* to be a ground-breaking project. Its subject matter, focused around the LGBTQ+ community and transgender characters had a strong impact on the public and provoked lengthy discussions. The work drew the public's attention to the way the human species is currently being redefined in terms of gender – one of the most important topics of our times. With this commission, we demonstrated how responsive and adaptable a theatre should be to social issues as sensitive as this. I am immensely proud of the way we responded to these concerns, with very rapid reflexes, hopefully setting an example of acceptance and inclusion, so far absent from other national Greek stages.'

Another 'first' is the GNO's initiative for an extensive educational presence at schools, which uniquely involves specially commissioned and adapted productions staged with the full participation of pupils. This season the work was Kornilios Selamsis' opera titled *Offenbach's La belle Helene*, with a libretto by Alexandra K* in a fresh new version of a myth and figure familiar to every school child.

Parallel to innovation on the artistic side, Koumendakis embarked on a complete overhaul of the GNO's antiquated technical structure and facilities. He moved the set workshop from its former cramped space to brand new, state-of-the-art premises, in a neighbourhood close to the hall. He also gave the costume department a magnificent studio on the fourth floor of the theatre, which also houses the thriving Ballet School (on the sixth floor).

All these goals – hard to reach anywhere, but especially in Greece – were achieved through Koumendakis' masterly way of managing people, advancing his aims without toxic confrontations. He attributes part of his success to 'being well organised, knowing how to choose the right collaborators and making very quick decisions, the latter crucial in Greece, with its somewhat stagnant bureaucracy.

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Opposite: Bluebeard's Castle was a collaboration between the young Greek director Themelis Glynatsis and designer Leslie Travers

Below right: The GNO's schools provision engages students in specially commissioned and adapted productions

Yet, you must try to get to where you want to be without confrontations. Every single person working here is hugely important in producing the final product. The more you respect their contribution, the more responsive they will be. The way you behave, talk and interchange with others – in other words the supreme art of diplomacy – is very important in a job like this.'

Speaking a few days before the premiere of *Madama Butterfly* (one of the GNO's two annual productions at the ancient open air Herodes Atticus Theatre, as part of the Athens Festival), directed by Olivier Py, what does Koumendakis consider to be next season's most important projects?

'The coming season offers a varied repertoire and four new productions which include some very important "firsts" for our theatre: one of the most daring is *Die Walküre*. I think we are now ready for this challenging adventure with a work of such orchestral magnificence and theatricality. The second is the double bill of *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*, staged by Nikos Karathanos, who worked such wonders with *Inland*, with sets by Leslie Travers, who designed the genius sets of *Bluebeard*. The production will star Dimitri Platanias, who has sung these roles many times abroad, including at Covent Garden.

'The third is the *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* by Kurt Weill, directed by Yannis Houvardas, a former director of the National Theatre.

ANDREAS SIMOPOULOS

Meeting Alexandros Efklidis, artistic director of the Alternative Stage

GREEK NATIONAL OPERA

'The agenda of the Alternative Stage – which had its own airy, attractive theatre, back to back with the Main Stage – is to provide a platform for new work by a wide variety of Greek creatives: composers, writers, directors, choreographers and performers , and new interactive art forms,' explains Alexandros Efklidis, himself a distinguished director and university professor.

The fertile co-existence of these two complementary, thriving organisms – something like having Covent Garden and the ENO co-existing under the same umbrella and on the same premises – is partly responsible for the GNO's huge popularity and almost universal acceptance by the local artistic community. It has also prevented accusations of elitism being hurled against a new and generously well-funded Institution.

'From the very beginning we had the very strong financial support of the Niarchos Foundation,' says Efklidis, 'precisely in order to establish and secure the continuity of the Alternative Stage within the GNO. Our aim was and remains the pairing of burgeoning and established Greek composers with specific subjects (plays, literary works, films or specific events) and the right creative teams to support their works. The production of a new work can either propel it to success and fame or bury it forever! This is not so easy in Greece, where there are few directors experienced enough in staging new works of musical theatre, especially before hearing the music fully orchestrated. So what is needed is a team aware of these problems and capable of overriding them. Our solution is to try and assemble the entire production team from the beginning, with ample time for developing an artistic osmosis that will enable decisions about key elements in the production to be taken jointly.

'Achieving these crucial balances is a big part of my job. I am responsible to the organisation both for my choice of works and their realisation. At the beginning all commissions were my own choices. But with time, composers began to trust us and to approach me with their own proposals, some of which are very interesting. We try to give a chance to as many artists as possible, obviously with varying degrees of success, and to develop and present musical theatre in all its forms: Greek operetta which is second to none, as well as Greek musicals, such as *Ftina Tsigara* (Cheap cigarettes).'

V.ISAEVA

Our opera house needs a work like *Mahagonny* – a work with a political/theatrical content which unites different eras and musical styles but is very difficult to stage because of its huge orchestration and the plethora of singers it demands.

'Next season's last new production will be *Turandot* in June 2024, directed by Andrei Serban and sets and costumes by Chloé Obolensky, at the Herodes Atticus ancient open-air theatre. It has a very long and relatively narrow stage spanning the entire space and a problematical acoustic. Although I realise that most directors take this into account, they seldom manage to produce sets suitable for this otherwise overwhelmingly impressive setting. I approached Chloé Obolensky, who is sensitive to this issue and has a way of rediscovering these spaces, which she totally respects and which mean a lot to her. In this case I asked her to choose her director, and she chose Serban.'

When I first interviewed Koumendakis in 2019, two years into his post, he had begun to experience 'occasional joys' at the way things were going 'and this feeds me inside'. Now, four years later, 'I am happy to say that almost all my initial aims have been achieved.

'GNO has a place among Europe's top ten opera houses, collaborates in co-productions with the world's greatest theatres and is internationally respected and admired. We have built a resident company of Greek singers under permanent contract. GNO now has a stock of a wide variety of works that would enable it to survive in difficult times for years, just on revivals.

'I have satisfaction in knowing I've created a solid system with a strong infrastructure which would be difficult to destroy. I hope it will enable GNO to continue to thrive after my eventual departure.' **ON**

NOAH MORRISON

Opera and identity

By Ashutosh Khandekar

Performing at London’s first ‘Classical Pride’ event, tenor Davóne Tines speaks about the importance of identity and expression in the life of an artist

‘The only reason I am an artist,’ says Davóne Tines, ‘is to express identity’. The 35-year-old bass-baritone has been championed as one of the most exciting figures on the contemporary music-theatre scene in America, bringing a rigorous intelligence to his exploration of personal expression and universal experience in the realm of art.

Tines’ fascination with identity is unsurprising. As a Black, gay performer who was brought up in Rural Virginia singing in the local Baptist church, going on to graduate from Harvard and the Juilliard, he is determined to bring out into the open all the different facets of his personal experience. His wonderfully resonant bass-baritone has all the promises of a great Verdian and eventually Wagnerian career. But so far he has eschewed traditional opera in favour of often hard-hitting contemporary music-theatre works, many of which he has helped to devise and curate, which allow him to bring his status of outsider into the spotlight.

Among Tines’ triumphs are *The Black Clown*, a hard-hitting exploration of racial prejudice in America, inspired by the poetry of Langston Hughes; and *Everything Rises*, a multimedia musical work exploring artistic journeys and family histories, co-created with violinist Jennifer Koh. Both works are far from what you would call ‘conventional’ opera, but they present strong narratives within a framework of music and song. ‘Traditional opera – that is the operatic canon that makes up so much of what opera houses present today – falls under certain conventions,’ says Tines. ‘But I think those conventions are a calcification of the greater possibility of the art form, which I think is to be very human and very in touch with the individual but always with the possibility of showing the universal *through* the personal.’

This month in London, Tines will appearing in Classical Pride at the Barbican Centre, where he shares the stage with leading LGBTQ+ musicians including opera singers Nicky Spence and Ella Taylor. The evening also features the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and LGBTQ+ chorus, conducted by Oliver Zeffman. Presented by broadcaster and DJ Nick Grimshaw, this will be the biggest Classical Pride concert to date, and chimes beautifully with Tines’ bid ‘to make explicit things that have been kept covert’ in our musical culture.

Tines’ own contribution to the evening is focused on settings from contemporary composers of texts by literary icons whose gay identity could never be fully revealed in their artistic output during their own lifetimes. ‘I’ll be singing songs from Caroline Shaw’s song cycle *Is a Rose* which features words by Gertrude Stein. And I’ll also be in a new piece called *Echoes*, written by Julian Anderson, a composer whose music I love.’ Anderson’s world premiere features soloists with full orchestra and chorus in a setting of *The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo* by Gerard Manley Hopkins, a poem that moves hauntingly from despair to hope.

MAGGIE HALL

'The import of the concert,' Tines explains, 'is to be able to able to place gay identity on a platform where it is celebrated and honoured as part of a continuous tradition of classical music. I'm excited that we will be allowing the generations of people who were constrained by the social strictures of their time, including poets such as Stein and Hopkins, to see themselves on stage in a setting that carries the notion of "pride" at its heart. Composers such as Poulenc and Tchaikovsky, both of whom will be performed in the concert, belonged to generations of musicians who were less free to express themselves fully. Classical Pride will be an occasion for all the artists involved, past and present, to be performed in a context where they can bring their complete selves to the stage, so that an important part of their personal identity can be be honoured and celebrated.'

The idea of bringing the 'whole self' to the stage is key part of Tines' desire to end the pigeonholing that artists have been subjected to through history. His own experience of vocal studies at the Juilliard highlighted the barriers that continue to exist between opera and other singing traditions. 'Early on in my vocal training, I was singing the *Arie Antiche*, the traditional Italian songs that form the bedrock of classical singing, and I was told that the style I was using was all wrong. I was used to singing in my Baptist church, bringing something, yes, looser, but just as intense and committed to my singing. Suddenly I was told that there was a distinction between opera singing and the way I sang in church. And at that moment, there was a split – I felt divided in two. The initial shock of this made me realise that I would have to join the two sides together, purposefully developing a way to reconcile the dichotomy.'

One way that Tines has attempted to heal the split is to create his own opportunities rather than rely on established institutions to accommodate his qualities as a singer and as an individual. His sociology degree from Harvard has inspired an exploration of Marx's ideas around 'species being', examining what it is to be human and an artist in the face of the corporate machine. To this end, he has become a key member of the American Modern Opera Company (AMOC), founded by composer Matthew Aucoin and director/choreographer Zack Winokur. The iconoclastic director Peter Sellars has dubbed AMOC 'the future of opera' – which seems like a daunting responsibility. Tines brushes off the notion that he is a revolutionary who is challenging the operatic establishment: 'The thing that concerns me most is to try to stay as true to myself as possible. I simply don't know the sum total of the entire art form that is opera, so I can't pretend to be its "change-maker". The idea of changing institutions is not at the forefront of my mind. If I can engage with institutions and remain authentic, and if that creates a shift in the approach that institutions take to their work, then that will be an achievement.' **ON**

Classical Pride takes place at the Barbican Centre London on 7 July. Proceeds from the evening will go to the Terence Higgins Trust, Amplifund and Rainbow Railroad. Barbican.org.uk

Tines' sociology degree from Harvard has inspired him to examine what it is to be an artist in the face of the corporate machine

'I simply don't know the sum total of the entire art form that is opera, so I can't pretend to be its "change-maker" '

When classical meets metal

By Lauren McQuistin • Photography by Miriam Demir/Yamaha London

Yamaha London's fusion event brought together rock, metal, opera and everything in between

Before I was listening to classical music I was listening to rock, metal and anime soundtracks. I was completely taken in by the size and scale of the drama, heavy use of distortion to the point of overwhelm, the plaintive melodies, and the absolute catharsis of someone feeling an emotion and screaming about it. Then I discovered opera, which seemed to do the exact same thing. I liked it so much I made it my career, becoming a soprano.

I wasn't born into classical music, so I had to learn the rules, sometimes the hard way – I had to learn concert hall etiquette, the unwritten codes of which composers are mainstream, and which ones will suggest you're a serious classical musician when you casually mention them in conversation, and how to smile and respond politely when people outside of the industry ask me what my real job is. I love belonging to this world, because I simply love classical music, passionate debates about Medtner and Arensky that only a small handful of people will appreciate, knowing I am clapping at the correct points in a concert, and I have a place of belonging in a niche industry – a small and richly dense world that is the centre of mine.

Despite this, the pathways into it weren't always easy. It has accessibility issues tied to classism, elitism and exclusivity. Many major institutions are doing incredible work in changing this with accessible pricing, offering relaxed performances, free tickets for under-21s and a focus on contemporary works.

In the effort of making classical music as accessible as it truly is, when it can carry baggage for people who have never been or wouldn't consider themselves welcome at a symphony or an opera, something I have control over is being open-minded to projects outside of the classical music genre.

Two things can be true at the same time. I can ardently believe that the concert hall setting of the great works is completely necessary to the arts in society, there are performance traditions we must uphold in our performances, and it can be enjoyed by absolutely anyone in any walk of life. Classical style isn't a museum that must be tiptoed around and have a protective patrol around it so it remains pure. It can be borrowed from, blended, and create something great in its own right. Yamaha Music London's event *When Classical Meets Metal* with Chiara Malvestiti demonstrated the power in blending styles.

In preparing for the event I listened to Metallurgy's podcast episode on Symphonic Metal, to get an idea of how people who loved metal talked about metal. Immediately I was struck by the attention to detail in differences between genres and subgenres (not unlike the discussions I've had about telling the difference between Handel and Haydn) with their own terms, language and listening techniques. In classifying Symphonic Metal they outlined that normally the albums tell a larger story, there is greater emphasis on form, it is usually through-composed and there are grander proportions – with the typical distorted guitar building and blending with strings and brass. There is also a lot of sampling from 'O Fortuna' and other high drama pieces from the Western canon.

The themes usually involve high fantasy, suffering, the paranormal, and gods and goddesses. Things that wouldn't be found out of place in a Handel opera or the French court. One of the most key features is the beauty, and edges, of the female voice, the juxtaposition of its sweetness against distortion, and how it can go from ethereal to powerful within moments.

Above and left:
singer Chiara Malvestiti

This was certainly true of Chiara Malvestiti, who immediately had a powerful presence on stage – wearing a sorceress' outfit and a horned headdress she commanded attention and prepared us for an exceptional amount of drama. She shifted between moods and tones effortlessly. Her voice moved between the musical worlds of using a classically trained soprano voice above heavy distortion and percussion as well as a variety of mythological worlds such as Nordic mythology in *Asgard*, and Egyptian mythology in *Son of the Sun*. She would sing about sirens, Gaia and moonlit nights – clearly enjoying the mystery and intrigue of these themes, and wholly exploring all of the esoterica and intrigue. She really came alive when singing in her native Italian in a cover of Diablo Swing Orchestra's *D'Angelo*. It was a synergy of culture and history, that a metal band fronted by an Italian singer, trained operatically in the country of where classical vocal pedagogy comes from, was covering an Italian song written by a metal band from Sweden.

Italian singer Sirio performed a set with guitarist Iacopo D'Alessandro - using his classical training to deliver a sensitive performance with clean vocals and stage presence, communicating with the audience and his guitarist like it was a lieder duet. His onstage chemistry with Chiara was palpable, and it was really clear these two performers really enjoy collaborating, with both of them enjoying the drama of their duets, and giving extremely generous performances.

Chopin's Ballade No 1 Op 23 in G minor was played exceptionally well by Jack Elgin. The other supporting act was The Glare, a female two-piece electronic, hip-hop outfit who had powerful vocals, great onstage connection, and relatable anger in their lyrics. It would seem like an odd transition to move from a Chopin Ballade to a pop song about the agony of dating in the 21st century, but thematically the leaps made as much sense as a Liederabend, and musically it was not unlike my Spotify when I put my most liked songs on shuffle. Two things, completely themselves, presented in their full form next to each other.

The diverse crowd were equally enthusiastic for Chopin as they were for symphonic metal

The power of musical styles combining and aligning was reflected in the extremely diverse crowd, equally enthusiastic for Chopin as they were for symphonic metal, as they were for all-girl electronic ensembles.

It reminded me of how it feels to love something without judging ourselves, wondering what it says about us or our industry. It was a very different night than I'm used to, and honestly I enjoyed it more than some operas I've been to. **ON**

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Sorrow and seduction: the psychology of *Werther*

By Hattie Butterworth

We meet Ginger Costa-Jackson and Leonardo Capalbo ahead of Grange Park Opera's production of Massenet's emotionally-charged opera

The second day of rehearsals for Grange Park's *Werther* was the first time that its principal singers, Italian-Americans mezzo soprano Ginger Costa-Jackson and tenor Leonardo Capalbo, had met.

'He's actually worked before with my sister' says Costa-Jackson, who comes from a family of three singing sisters. 'In both productions he's on stage pining for us and then dies because he can't love us – so it's dangerous to love a Costa-Jackson sister!'

'Well, it also means I tend to make pretty bad choices,' Capalbo jovially admits: 'They're beautiful and seductive, but they're not available, so...'.

Massenet's *Werther* certainly brings audiences also to the extremes of emotional experience. Loosely based on Goethe's infamous 1774 *Sturm und Drang* novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, the opera (sung in French) maps the experiences of young love, grief, duty and even mental health between Werther and Charlotte.

The book's psychological tragedy made the character of Werther into a hero figure among young men at the time, with many choosing to adopt his distinctive blue and yellow outfit. It was also said to have led to the first identified instances of media-triggered suicide, causing the book to be banned in some communities.

The production at Grange Park sees sets and direction from John Doyle and is conducted by Christopher Hopkins. It's the first time performing with the Surrey-based company for Costa-Jackson, but not for Capalbo, whose recent roles include *Les contes d'Hoffmann* at the New National Theatre Tokyo and is soon to take on the role of Don Carlo at Grand Théâtre de Genève.

'You definitely feel part of a family at Grange Park,' he says. Capalbo's debut with the company was another *Don Carlo* in 2019, 'There's a real sense of community within the audience which I'm excited to return to. Country house opera experiences are very special – you find a different pace for things.'

This year, Werther is a role debut for the tenor. Capalbo's fresh reading of the character of Werther means entering into a deep empathy with his emotional experience: 'I want to make him a living, breathing

›

GRADE MEDIA

GRANGE PARK

COSTA-JACKSON

Above from left: Leonardo Capalbo made his Grange Park debut as Don Carlo in 2019

Ginger Costa-Jackson is the duty-bound Charlotte in Grange Park's Werther

person who is just very deep within himself. An introvert who sees this woman and decides, "She's everything that I could imagine. She's exactly who I want to spend my life with," and because of that, he can't help but put himself in a situation where, yes, he suffers. There is pain, and there are terrible choices to be made, and in the end, he has to end his life.'

'She doesn't want to do anything dishonourable,' says Costa-Jackson, explaining Charlotte's duty to marry Albert, following the death of her mother, 'but there is this instant connection between the two of them – a meeting of the minds and the spirit. It's fascinating to have to be married to someone, but to not feel that personal bond.

'I think Charlotte feels very alone in the world. She's taking care of her younger siblings and has taken on the role of mother, but serving and caring for her family gives her a lot of joy. Then when Werther comes, he takes away some of her loneliness and some of her grief, and it is being with him that makes her feel so alive after the death of her mother.'

It's complex and although the story is, as Costa-Jackson points out, 'typically operatic with some very grandiose ideas', much of it resonates with relationships in the contemporary world. I get a sense that both have an understanding and affection for their characters, and ask Capalbo about managing the toxicity, or narcissism, of Werther's character.

'To psychologically profile the character is interesting from an analytical point of view, but in being the character, I don't believe that it's helpful. It's important to *be* the character and stay in the present moment.

'If you remove yourself from the context, looking at him as a therapist, you might say, "Hey, it's not helpful to say 'I'm going to kill myself if you don't love me!' " But as people who are playing the two characters, you have to absolutely believe what they're saying at face value. You can't explain it, this grand love, and you cannot understand it rationally. But what's the point of singing the role if you can't love your characters, believe what they believe and feel what they feel?'

Costa-Jackson adds the context of Werther and Charlotte being 23 and 20 years old respectively: 'They're just out of their adolescence, going through a lot of hormones. I think we all remember the devastation of our first time in love and the first breakup.'

Often away for months, life for these singers has its fair share of challenge. But the reciprocal nature of the profession of opera singing is something Costa-Jackson explains as a full-bodied experience: 'We've chosen this, and perhaps it's chosen us – there are a lot of sacrifices, but I find that that continual cycle of being somewhere new very exciting. You get to see the beauties of the earth and meet many new, wonderful people. Some singers are stage animals and live to be on the stage, and for some others this is purely a job. I think we all have different reasons for doing it.'

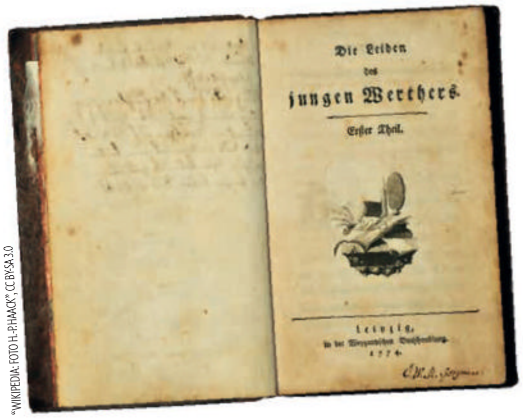
Why should people choose to see *Werther*? 'The music is stunning. I think that people will be very gripped by it - it'll be visually impeccable with the set and beautiful costumes, then the passion of two Italian-Americans!' laughs Capalbo.

For Costa-Jackson, it is about the communion of connecting with an audience: 'You can feel everyone's emotion around you as the music creates an incredible vibration. As the audience you can feel it enter into you. We're 70 per cent water, so it's actually affecting you physically.'

'*Werther* is relevant because people experience these same types of emotions every single day,' Capalbo says. 'We get extremely angry or become completely despondent or apathetic about something. This is human nature.' **ON**

Werther *is at Grange Park Opera until 14 July*
Grangeparkopera.co.uk

The first print of The Sorrows of Young Werther *by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*



Die Leiden
des
jungen Werthers.
Erſter Theil.

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by Giuseppe Verdi
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Tosca
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by Giacomo Puccini
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OPERA IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

Southwest Opera

Alburquerque, New Mexico

By Karyl Charna Lynn

As it celebrates 50 years of opera in the Chihuahuan Desert, we explore this groundbreaking opera company through its production of Rossini's *Le Comte Ory*

Alburquerque, founded in 1706 and named after the then Spanish Viceroy, Francisco Fernández de la Cueva, eighth Duke of Alburquerque, was originally part of Mexico. The Gadsden Purchase in 1853 made New Mexico a US territory. Almost six decades later it became the 47th state of the USA with a 50% Hispanic population. Situated at 5,000 feet in a valley, Albuquerque is delineated by the Sandia and Manzano Mountains to the north and east, and rugged lava cliffs – the result of ancient volcanic eruptions – to the south and west. You arrive into Albuquerque Sunport airport (so named because the city enjoys 310 sun days a year) and as far as the eye can see, the landscape is different shades of brown. Centuries ago, indigenous people occupied the land, living in dwellings of stone, adobe, dirt, and logs dubbed pueblos which remain today as the predominate architectural style (and colour) known as Spanish Pueblo Revival Style.

The city offers diverse attractions, from a ride on the world's longest aerial tramway, Sandia Peak Tramway, to the mountain top for a spectacular, 11,000 square mile panoramic view, to walking among centuries old petroglyphs, created by the indigenous people, 400 of which are viewable in Piedras Marcadas Canyon. Albuquerque is closely associated with nuclear development, as seen in the National Museum of Nuclear Science and History. Displayed in its outdoor Heritage Park are historical artifacts including the enormous B-52 Stratofortress, the soaring 100ft Trinity Test Tower, and ICBM Cruise Missiles. Inside are the first two atomic bombs, Little Boy (a replica) and Fat Man (one of the four originals manufactured) that ended World War II, alongside exhibits of today's uses of atomic energy. The city's Mexican roots run deep, especially in Old Town with its centuries old Plaza, and adobe shops lining the streets.

Opera Southwest (OSW), originally called Albuquerque Opera Theater, is a small company with big ambitions celebrating 50 years, but with a rocky history. Inaugurated in 1973 with *Così fan tutte* at Popejoy Hall at University of New Mexico, OSW was founded as a local, semi-professional company by conductor Kurt Frederick and James Blatcher. By 1989, the company was almost bankrupt. Performances were reduced to two with piano accompaniment. The turning point came in mid-2000 when the company was entrusted to maestro Anthony Barrese, originally music director then artistic director, and Tony Zancanella, executive director. Together they have grown the company

Adèle (Teresa Castillo) with Isolier (Amanda Cruder)

LANCE W. OZIER

from a $300,000 budget to $1.3 million, make their own scenery and costumes, increased the scheduled from two to four operas including a new or rarely performed opera every season, including Franco Faccio's *Amleto*, Héctor Armienta's *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Zorro,* and moved performances to the Journal Theater, which is the size of theatres where many Rossini operas were premiered. Every season includes a bel canto rarity, a Spanish/Latino 20th- or 21st-century work, one popular opera, and an unknown/rarely staged one-act farce performed by apprentice singers in the Albuquerque Museum's outdoor amphitheatre.

I found myself in the company of Opera Southwest for its performance of Rossini's *Le Comte Ory,* described by artistic director Barrese as a 'hybrid of Ravel's sensuality and Groucho Marx's slapstick', with the juxtaposition between the sophisticated French textured music and the ridiculous mistaken identities of the plot. Although an opera buffa, recitative replaces almost all spoken dialogue. Most of Act 1 was originally composed for King Charles X's coronation in Reims – Rossini's *Viaggio a Reims,* with a newly added Act 2 to form *Le Comte Ory*. The result is a slight disconnect between the two acts in style, consistency, tension, and humour. For comedy to work, it must be inherently funny, but Act 1 was not, relying on excessively exaggerated slapstick, so outrageous that it ceased to be funny.

Updated from France during the Crusades era to Art Nouveau France mid-1890s with the men away fighting a war, the opera opened on a realistic recreation of the exterior of the Formoutiers Spa with Adèle de Formoutier's castle visible in background, and Ory's 'hut' on the side. Ory, disguised as a health guru, promises to improve everyone's love life as the women, one by one, enter and exit his hut while buttoning up their blouses and straightening their skirts. His primary goal, however, is the seduction of Countess Adèle de Formoutier which, as Act 1 concluded, is thwarted by his page, Isolier. Ory then disguises himself and his men as nuns, and successfully gains entrance to the countess' castle. After an amusing series of comic blunders, the opera reached its pinnacle with a hilarious *ménage à trois* precisely executed: Ory, (tenor Christopher Bozeka) believed he was chasing and attempting to grope Adèle (soprano Teresa Castillo) when he was actually chasing and attempting to grope his page Isolier (mezzo-soprano Amanda Cruder) who had previously swapped costumes with Adèle to facilitate the ruse.

> *Despite its farcical nature, Le Comte Ory deals with serious contemporary issues*

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Top: ‘War on women’ – Le Comte Ory *alludes to serious contemporary issues*

Left: Teresa Castillo as Adèle

Bozeka, however, successfully seduced with his gorgeous, spot-on high notes, exploited the ridiculousness of his character, and gave a technically accurate performance. Castillo nailed the coloratura with her fluid, melodic voice, executing the prima donna role with an intensity that infused energy and vitality into her character. If it had not been announced, we would never have known that she was a last-minute substitution, as was Katherine DeYoung as Ragonde. DeYoung made a hilarious, campy Ragonde and Amanda Crider was convincingly expressive as Isolier, especially in the *ménage à trois* scene. Maestro Barrese showed he knows his Rossini with his impeccable comic timing, evident in the precision with which he conducted *Le Comte Ory*.

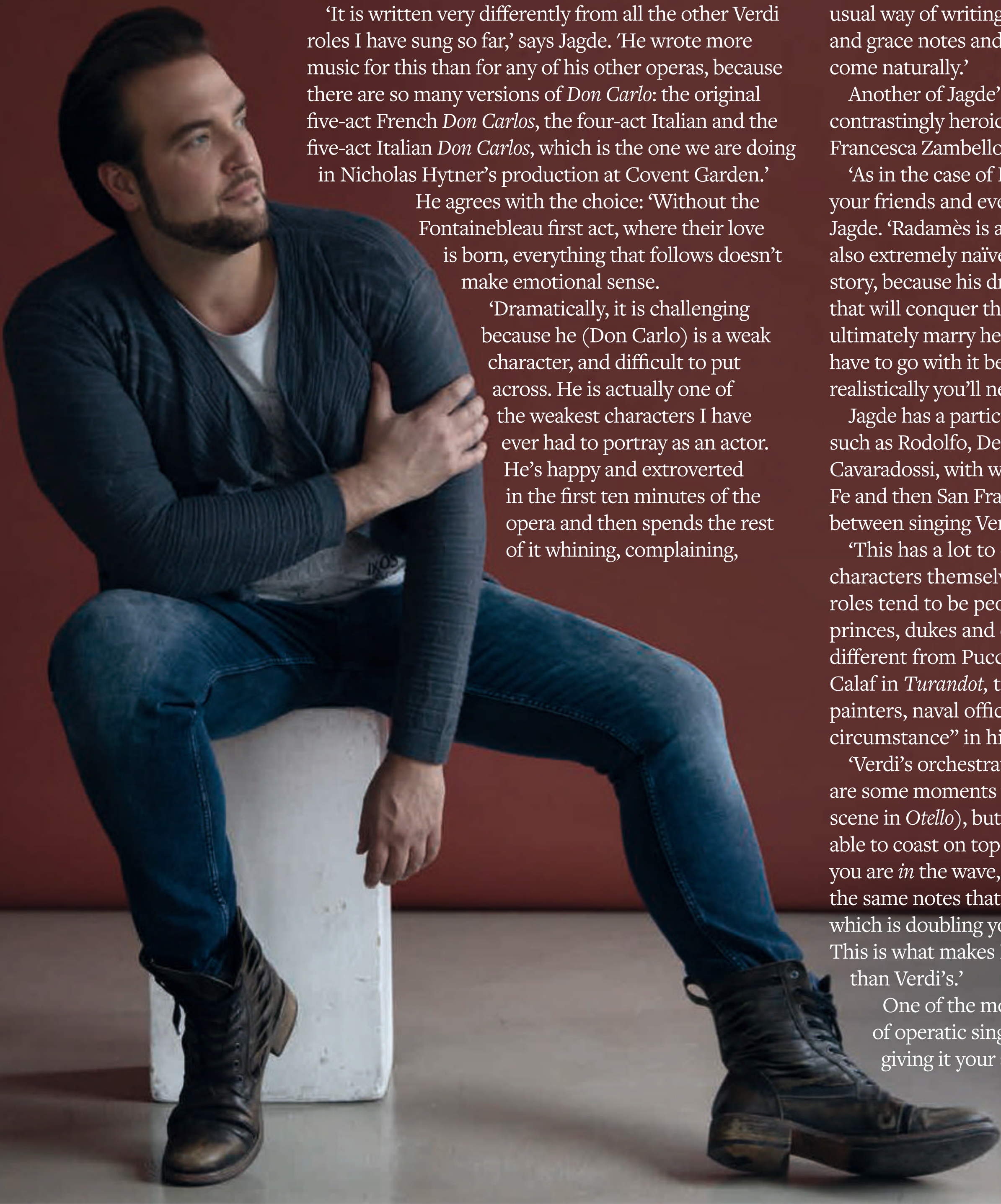
Despite its silly and farcical nature, *Le Comte Ory* deals with serious contemporary issues but in such a hilarious way that one momentarily forgets and laughs at the attempted seduction. But the line 'War on women' reminded me of today's myriad of powerful opera stars, movie moguls, and television personalities accused of sexual assault, and its victims. **ON**

ADOBE STOCK

Coming to *life*

By Helena Matheopoulos

Finishing a season of 'firsts' with Don Carlo at Covent Garden, we speak to American tenor Brian Jagde about learning Verdi, his beginnings as a baritone and life on- and off-stage



American tenor Brian Jagde has enjoyed a season brimming with exciting role debuts, including *Samson et Dalila* at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples, and Canio in *I Pagliacci* in Rome – to this he is soon to add the title role in *Don Carlo* at Covent Garden.

'It is written very differently from all the other Verdi roles I have sung so far,' says Jagde. 'He wrote more music for this than for any of his other operas, because there are so many versions of *Don Carlo*: the original five-act French *Don Carlos*, the four-act Italian and the five-act Italian *Don Carlos*, which is the one we are doing in Nicholas Hytner's production at Covent Garden.'

He agrees with the choice: 'Without the Fontainebleau first act, where their love is born, everything that follows doesn't make emotional sense.

'Dramatically, it is challenging because he (Don Carlo) is a weak character, and difficult to put across. He is actually one of the weakest characters I have ever had to portray as an actor. He's happy and extroverted in the first ten minutes of the opera and then spends the rest of it whining, complaining, protesting and scheming against his father. His intervention is so ill-judged that it ends up with everybody dying!'

He points out that musically, Carlos is written very differently from the other Verdi roles he has sung. 'Even the way Verdi ends the phrases here is different from his usual way of writing them. Here there are little twists and grace notes and while I was learning it, it didn't come naturally.'

Another of Jagde's other major Verdi roles is contrastingly heroic: Radamès in *Aida* – a role he first in Francesca Zambello's production in San Francisco.

'As in the case of Don Carlos, it's a "you try to help your friends and everybody dies" situation!' Laughs Jagde. 'Radamès is a warrior and a soldier, but he is also extremely naïve. This is really the crux of the story, because his dream is to be the leader of the army that will conquer the land of the woman he loves and ultimately marry her. It's very convoluted and you have to go with it because if you start to think about it realistically you'll never be able to sing the character!'

Jagde has a particular love also for Puccini roles, such as Rodolfo, Des Grieux, Calaf, Pinkerton, and Cavaradossi, with which he made his role debut at Santa Fe and then San Francisco. So what are the differences between singing Verdi and Puccini?

'This has a lot to do with the emotion, with the characters themselves,' explains Jagde. 'Verdi's tenor roles tend to be people of a certain status: kings, princes, dukes and counts - leaders of some kind. Very different from Puccini's who, with the exception of Calaf in *Turandot,* tend to be everyday men: students, painters, naval officers. Puccini has less "pomp and circumstance" in his operas than Verdi.

'Verdi's orchestration is also generally lighter. There are some moments where it's not (such as the storm scene in *Otello*), but they are few and even then you are able to coast on top of the music, like a wave. In Puccini you are *in* the wave, because you are singing exactly the same notes that are being played by the orchestra, which is doubling your melody, like a sort of amplifier. This is what makes Puccini roles more challenging than Verdi's.'

One of the most crucial and fascinating aspects of operatic singing is finding the balance between giving it your all, and at the same time being on

CHRIS SINGER

guard, and able to be in and out of the role at the same time. How does one learn this?

'We all have our third eye – our watcher, monitoring us. I probably learnt that back in college, while performing more "casually". In order to walk onstage, knowing that you have to calm your nerves, it makes it imperative to learn that balance. Now, I practice meditation and also have a therapist. I shied away from therapy for a long time, but we all have issues which we can't, or shouldn't, bring with us on stage. We have to sing as beautifully as we can and we have to become this or that character for three or four hours. If we bring along our own problems, these can sometimes get in the way.

'I always say that to be a good singer, you need a good teacher, a good agent and a good therapist. These are the important people in your life. They are family, and you have them around to call on and to support you emotionally. You have to have all the support you can to commit to this profession, which not an easy life, it's not fun and games. In fact, mostly it's not fun. You have to work really hard at this job. You've got to really love it, otherwise, it's not worth it.'

So how did it all begin? Born in Plainview, Long Island Jagde moved to Queens and then Rockland County, 40 minutes north of NYC when he was two.

'I was lucky to have a roof over my head and food on the table. My mom became a chef and catered for a while and my grandfather was the only person to bring me to New York occasionally, for a show or a meal, which was nice. I always loved music and so did my family. We always had music on at dinner – not classical stuff, usually rock or pop music, although I do remember listening to *La bohème* with Pav and Freni on record. My father sang in choirs and had a band when he was young. I remember my sister and I singing all the way during the thirteen hour drive to South Carolina for a family vacation!'

So it was a happy childhood? 'It was not. There was a problem with alcoholism, as often happens in families, but we got through it. Still, I wanted to get out of it and make something of my life. My grandfather said "I know you like to sing, but that's not something you can make into a career"! So I went to college to study Computer Science and Business. I toiled and struggled with the subject matter all day, because it just didn't click - it didn't suit me.'

Jagde then heard about a small school - Purchase College close to where he lived, offering classical voice classes. After enrolling, the first words the professor spoke to the class on their first day was: 'You should know that only one half of 1% of you are likely to have a career.' As there were only sixty students in the room, this statistically, says Jagde, meant that no one present would make it! 'But I said I didn't care!' He was already twenty and at that point classified as a baritone, 'I did have a dark colour to my voice, but everyone was asking me if I was sure I wasn't a tenor. The vocal training there was not right for me. My voice was sitting at the back of my throat, so I was creating a false colour and a false technique.'

LUCIANO ROMANO TEATRO DI SAN CARLO

Brian Jagde in Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila* at the Teatro di San Carlo

Eight years later, in 2008, after completing both a bachelor and masters degree, he was lucky enough to find a teacher, Michael Paul, who immediately recognised him as a tenor. 'I learnt all my technique from him and continue to study with him to this day'. After working with him and switching to the tenor voice, Jagde joined the Merola Young Artist Program with the San Francisco Opera, and went on to join the company's Adler Fellowship programme for three years. In 2012, he won second prize in Plácido Domingo's Operalia Competition, as well as receiving the Birgit Nilsson Prize for Wagner-Strauss repertoire.

This led to a series of important debuts: Covent Garden as Pinkerton, the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Cavaradossi, the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples as Don José, Houston Grand Opera as the Prince in *Rusalka*, Opera de Paris as Don Alvaro and the Met in 2014 as Elemer in *Arabella*.

Future plans include his first Wagnerian role, Siegmund, which he is particularly looking forward to: 'It's not a difficult role, and I would love to precede it with Lohengrin, an Italianate role ideal for my voice. And I would love to sing Samson again and again! Everyone was telling me how difficult and demanding it is before I sang it - there are very few tenors who do it. It is certainly a very heavy role with a dense, almost Wagnerian orchestration and, although lower than most of the roles I sing, the few high notes it does have can be a bit challenging because you've been singing at a low tessitura most of the evening. But it came to me so naturally that it almost felt like butter! I have never experienced a similar sensation in any other role.'

But how does he like to relax? 'I'm a TV addict! I watch about 70 series a year! I turn off my brain, and watch the way people act. I also like to go to the gym and work off the stress. If I don't start looking after my body now, it will be too late to try later on. I want to make myself as healthy as possible - physically and mentally. There is no end to the process of self-improvement.' **ON**

Don Carlo *is at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden until 15 July*

10 Podcasts

for the opera lover

By Rebecca Toal

Exploring the best in opera podcasts through this current collection

1 Aria Code

ARIA CODE
WQXR
The Metropolitan Opera

Unlike many podcasts that tackle the bigger topics in life, Rhiannon Giddens of *The Aria Code* instead chooses to zoom in on specific opera arias, approaching the overarching themes from analysing musical intricacies. Through political, historical and musical lenses and a selection of personal experiences, the podcast visits some of the world's most influential arias from the likes of *La traviata, The Magic Flute, Carmen, Tosca* and newer works such as Brett Dean's *Hamlet* and Terence Blanchard's *Fire Shut Up in My Bones.* As well as riveting commentary, each episode ends with a full performance of the chosen aria, giving the listener the chance to ponder these new insights. Even if you weren't an opera buff before listening to this podcast, you'll be *obsessed* afterwards. Produced in partnership with WQXR, The Metropolitan Opera and WNYC Studios, this is one not to miss.

RT recommends: *Breaking Mad: Donizetti's Lucia di Lammermoor*

2 Joanna and The Maestro

Joanna
& The Maestro
LISTEN NOW

A new weekly podcast for 2023, Joanna Lumley poses the questions she has always wanted to ask her husband, the conductor, pianist and 'Maestro' Stephen Barlow. With a sense of lightness and humour yet depth, the duo discuss all things classical music, with episodes entitled *What's Wrong with Opera?*, *Sex, Death & Pythagoras?* and the like. Their passion for classical music is evident (as well as opera, rock and pop), and Lumley's podcast-perfect tones give an air of absolute command despite her supposed musical amateurism. Lucy Bulmer in the *Sunday Times* said Joanna and the Maestro makes you 'feel like you're in the room with the hosts, sitting in on a genuine personal conversation.'

RT recommends: *The Voice: Frank Sinatra, Elvis and Doris Day*

3 Every Voice with Terrance McKnight

Supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts

EVERY VOICE
WITH TERRANCE MCKNIGHT
WQXR

An absolutely vital podcast whose first season tackles the conversation around representation of Blackness in opera.

Terrance McKnight is a personable and compelling host, facilitating electrifying interviews and investigations into the traditions of classical music. Each episode stares these problematic and murky traditions dead in the face, and McKnight goes about his explorations with assuredness, style and wisdom. In four-part explorations with guests, McKnight explores issues such as racism, lazy stereotypes, Black manhood, and tokenism within the music and the performances of *The Magic Flute, Otello* and *Aida*. Meticulously researched, edited and structured, this podcast should be on every opera-lover's radar.

RT recommends: *Otello: UNMOORED*

4 The Voice Coach

The Voice Coach
Podcast
NIC REDMAN

All you've ever wanted to know about vocal health in easy-to-listen, bitesize episodes. Though not about the singing voice specifically, *The Voice Coach* educates us about universally-useful voice topics such as vocal hydration, reducing vocal fatigue, what to do if you lose your voice, breath awareness, vocal resonance and how hayfever affects our vocal health. Nic Redman, voice actor and vocal coach, hosts her beautifully presented and researched show once or twice monthly. Whether you're an opera singer looking to take care of your voice between performances or an avid opera-goer that's interested in how the voice works, take a listen to this podcast.

RT recommends: *066 Tips for Speaking and Performing Outdoors*

5 Fach My Life

FACH
MY
LIFE

The fact that the hosts of *Fach My Life* feel compelled to use pseudonyms says all we need to know about the dark side of the opera industry. Over three series, 'Ros' and 'Adele' present us with relevant and vital topics such as sexual harassment, racism, inaccessibility within the Arts, genius worship, pay-to-sing 'opportunities' and young artist programmes. With clear listener support and validation, the two gain increasing confidence in their value and influence throughout the seasons, resulting in some excellently researched investigative angles and advice for other singers. Although the topics they broach are no laughing matter, Ros and Adele do an astounding job of entertaining, educating and inspiring.

RT recommends: *Pay-to-Sing PTSD*

6 Words First: Talking Text in Opera

WORDS FIRST
Talking Text in Opera

Director and choreographer Keturah Stickann delves into the art of opera libretto with guests that rarely take centre stage. A refreshing chance to hear from the librettists, lyricists, directors and producers from all over the world, we hear about writing strong women, reinterpreting classic text, the differences between US and European liberettos, site-specific productions ... anything you could ever want to know about creating an opera. Stickann's questions are non-presumptuous and inquisitive, and she welcomes us into the intricate inner workings of putting words and music together, and how their coupling can create the storytelling that compels, moves and provokes.

RT recommends: *Alaina Viau and Reaching for an Equitable Operatic Landscape*

7 The O Word

Established in 2020, *The O Word* is brought to us weekly by Welsh National Opera and journalist Gareth Jones. Jones is a refreshing change from the usual opera podcast host: his media background means that his interviewing skills are unrivalled and his outsider's perspective is razor sharp. In measured tones, Jones asks his guests some difficult questions in a charming yet assertive way while simultaneously revelling in the opportunity to talk about something he is passionate about. Episodes cover topics that resonate with opera newcomers and veterans alike: *Is there a future for opera?*, *Why do we need a critical voice?*, and *How important is philanthropy for opera?* For Welsh-speakers, the WNO has released a sister podcast, *Cipolwg*, with Lorna Prichard.

RT recommends: *Why do we need a critical voice?*

8 Dress: Fancy

DRESS:
FANCY

Okay, so not strictly an opera podcast but if you love costumes and the glamour of opera, you're going to love this. Although the host of *Dress: Fancy*, Lucy Clayton, cautions us that this is not a podcast analysing theatre or film costumes, she leads us through the history of fashion in a way that opera-fanatics will adore. With guests ranging from designers to activists, authors to fancy-dressers, Clayton addresses the escapism of fancy dress, gender roles, sustainability, eccentricity, identity and marginalisation.

The show notes explain, 'It's about ordinary people in extraordinary outfits', an idea that fits so perfectly with opera as a whole as a departure from, and a reflection of real life at the same time.

RT recommends: *Playful Pageantry: Costume revelry at the Royal Opera House*

9 The Gramophone Classical Music Podcast

G
GRAMOPHONE
PODCAST

An interview-based podcast from *Opera Now's* sister-title *Gramophone* magazine, talking with renowned classical music artists from all over the globe about their latest releases, endeavours and topical expertise. With episodes dating back to 2006, James Jolly and Martin Cullingford have hosted a mammoth catalogue of interviews (more than 400!) with guests including Dame Emma Kirkby, Nadine Sierra, Cyrille Dubois, Jonathan Tetelman, Jennifer Johnston and Andrew Nethsingha. Not just for singers, the podcast also features instrumentalists, conductors and other artists of note, discussing both aspects of the music itself and life as a performer.

RT recommends: *Joseph Middleton on playing for singers*

10 Unnatural Acts of Opera

Although the last episode of *Unnatural Acts of Opera* was released back in 2009, the podcast is still available via Apple podcasts. Hosted by La Cieca (the drag persona of music critic James Jorden), the podcast is a sister project to the underground queer zine/blog, *Parterre Box*, that was first distributed in the men's loos at the Metropolitan Opera. Over 200 episodes, La Cieca presents live recordings of operas one act at a time, bookending the episodes with hilarious, gossipy commentary. Though peppered with controversial takes, the podcast is still a lighter and more amusing way to appreciate opera, and a brilliant chance to listen to some older recordings.

RT recommends: *Macbeth (Verdi) Act 1* ON

GREEN

The World's Wife

Milton Court Concert Hall, Barbican

MUSIC ★★★★

STAGING ★★★★★

Review by Claire Jackson • Photos by Ash Knotek/Barbican

Ragazze Quartet and baritone Lucia Lucas

'Lucas blends lyricism with powerful spoken word': baritone Lucia Lucas

One of the first books I owned was a copy of *Famous Sisters of Great Men*, Marianne Kirlew's compendium of compact biographies, including Fanny Mendelssohn and Dorothy Wordsworth. As a bookbinder, my grandfather had bought it primarily as an example of early-1900s hand-bound methods. While that craft has since declined, the focus on formerly sidelined women has sharpened: *Six*, the musical currently touring the UK, reimagines the story of Henry VIII's wives; the 2019 opera *Jack the Ripper* adjusts the lens on the women who were victimised by the Whitechapel murderer. Similarly, Tom W Green's 2017 chamber opera *The World's Wife* is based on Carol Ann Duffy's collection of poems under the same title (1999), which apply the phrase 'behind every successful man is a successful woman' to notable men in myth, legend and history.

We are almost at the end of the first monologue – 'Little Red-Cap' – before soloist Lucia Lucas turns to face the Milton Court audience. She's dressed in red, as are the players of the Ragazze Quartet, who are also on stage – not sat neatly in a corner, but fully involved with the carefully choreographed movements. The red is appropriate for the tale of Little Red Riding Hood, here a teenager who is predated upon by a poetry-reading red-wine swilling wolf, but who, ten years later, makes a blistering escape. It's also the colour of womanhood, used on stage to great effect in ENO's recent production of Poul Ruders' *The Handmaid's Tale*, and in this staging represents 11 of Duffy's original 31 characters. Clever block staging is dismantled and rebuilt like Duplo; as Mrs Icarus, Lucas stands on one as if to fly; later, she'll lie down on a bed made of soil – the theatre becomes dusty and earthy.

Having started life as a song cycle, *The World's Wife* was premiered as music theatre piece by Welsh National Opera in 2017 and has again been reworked for this new production to suit Lucas' baritone voice. The transgender singer is consistently superb in this 100-minute performance, whether it's conveying humour as the beleaguered Mrs Aesop or darkness as Salome ('I'd done it before and doubtless I'll do it again'), Lucas blends lyricism with powerful spoken word. Green's score takes inspiration from historic women composers, including Barbara Strozzi, Francesca Caccini, Clara Schumann and Elisabeth Lutyens. These references are subtle, never pastiche, with interesting use of electronics to loop phrases and create the illusion of a larger ensemble.

By the time we meet Demeter, Lucas has soiled knees, her makeup is smudged; we've seen her breast and belly. Such is the life of an opera star. What is less expected is that, in solidarity, the members of the Ragazze Quartet are also climbing atop their blocks, slowly taking off their clothes as recorded testimonies of their own experiences as women play out into the darkness. It's a powerful yet unnecessary addendum; a pat on the head after a punch to the stomach.

PUCCINI

Tosca

Review by Adrian Mourby • Photos by Alex Jaouen

Carima Priapea at the King's Head, London

MUSIC ★★★
STAGING ★★★

Radical: an all-male Tosca

Alistair Sutherland as Scarpia

Carmina Priapea claims its production of *Tosca* is not intended to be radical. Setting Puccini's second undisputed masterpiece in a London gay club where Scarpia, as head of security, sniffs amyl nitrate, may not strike everyone as completely outré, but no one would dispute the radicalism of making Tosca male.

Calvin Wells, who directed this show for his own company, also starred in the title role. He is a very big man but has a soprano voice – not countertenor but soprano. His unusual range is disconcerting. Close your eyes and the role of Floria Tosca did sound as if it were sung by a woman. In the opening performances Calvin could certainly hit all the notes, but a throat infection had run round the entire cast at the King's Head pub in Islington and Calvin still hadn't recovered. This meant that he resorted to belting out the higher notes to be sure of them. Unfortunately this meant his voice lacked the necessary subtlety and complexity of Floria Tosca. Nevertheless his face was wonderfully expressive, his eyes switching quickly from tenderness to jealousy to rage.

Recovered from infection were two very fine actors. Robert Felstead as Cavaradossi was a scruffy painter in denim dungarees working on a mural of drag queen RuPaul in the back room of this nightclub when Scarpia took a dislike to him and a strong liking to his boyfriend (Tosca). This was a finely sung, complex performance by a tenor who has also played a lot of G&S, but the stand-out star of the show was undoubtedly Alistair Sutherland as Scarpia. Dressed in a black string vest, heavy gold curb chain and guyliner, this Scarpia was, like all the roles in this production, either homosexual or bisexual, but he fought physically with his genuine attraction to Tosca. In a world of fairly continual gay fumbling there was actually some surprising tenderness between Scarpia and Tosca in Act 2. On more than one occasion Tosca embraced the club's head thug as if genuinely asking for his help.

It's a shame that Carmina Priapea didn't have the funds for surtitles as a lot is achieved by having singers sing the libretto in its original language while surtitles move the narrative off in a different direction. So while Cavaradossi and Angelotti sing about the Rome Republic, you have to read the synopsis to realise that Angelotti and Cavadorossi are from the same Angelotti gang, while Scarpia and the Spoletto crew are from their rivals in London's clubland. This is an interesting idea. It stops the painter being an innocent civilian caught up in a power struggle. Here Cavaradossi is definitely part of the Angelotti mob, which goes some way towards explaining why the painter went powerfully toe to toe with Scarpia in the interrogation scene.

This was a production of ideas and they were good ideas. Scarpia may be a baron and Cavaradossi a *cavaliere* but the baritone operates in a world of physical thuggery and the tenor is his victim. Decades ago Jonathan Miller proved that *Rigoletto* works in a world of New York gangsters. Calvin Wells proved that *Tosca* makes perfect sense set in the world of feuding London gay clubs. **ON**

DVOŘÁK

Rusalka

Bergen National Opera, Norway
MUSIC ★★★★
STAGING ★★★★

Malin Byström and Brandon Jovanovich

Review by Susan Nickalls • Photography by Magnus Skrede

A water sprite who falls in love with and marries a human might well be a fairy tale, but the otherworldliness of Dvořák's opera is stripped away in director Àlex Ollé's more grounded approach in his production for Bergen National Opera. For a start there is no water, which often felt at odds with the mercurial score and meant that the mysterious elemental features, which are so integral to the work, were absent. Instead the opera explored two starkly different worlds; that of the 'haves' and the marginal and ignored 'have nots'.

The opening scene is a park with abandoned wrought iron tables, chairs and sun loungers where a group of homeless people are gathered. These included the three woodsprites (the glorious trio of Hamida Kristoffersen, Marcela Randem and Monika Jägerová) and members of the Theatre Tigers, a group of young people and adults with different disabilities. Wearing muted colours, they were almost indistinguishable from the backdrop and large quantities of leaves strewn across the stage from which Malin Byström (Rusalka) emerges.

Allison Cook and Brandon Jovanovich

Byström's entrance was as dramatic as her sensational rich earthy voice which gave her perfectly pitched Song to the Moon an added poignancy. The harmonious synergy between the soprano and Brandon Jovanovich (the Prince) provided a foil to the sharper tones of Rusalka's rival the Foreign Princess (Allison Cook) and the witch Ježibaba. Decked out in leather and fur, clutching designer shopping bags, Hege Høisæter strutted the stage barely concealing her distain for the water sprite. Nevertheless she uses her magic to give Rusalka human

Hanna Havre Angelshaug, Marcela Randem, Anders Christiansen, Ante Jerkunica (in front), Julie Knudsen and Ivar Waage Johannessen

form. This involved giving her a new dress, a pair of high-heeled shoes and in case we missed the point, she ate an apple.

The mellow and persuasive tones of Ante Jerkunica as the water goblin Vodník was a highlight and there were solid performances from Igor Gnidii as the gamekeeper and Siv Oda Hagerupsen as the kitchen boy. There were also nice contributions from the largely off-stage chorus made up of singers from the Edvard Grieg Kor and Bergen Philharmonic Choir, coached by chorus master Håkon Matti Skrede.

This is the first time *Rusalka* has been performed in Bergen and only its second outing in Norway. Conductor Eivind Gullberg Jensen, the new artistic and general director of Bergen National Opera, also conducted the Norwegian premiere at the Oslo Opera House in 2009. His passion for Dvořák's music shone through in the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra's polished reading of the score which bristled with lively folk rhythms and beautifully executed instrumental details.

Malin Byström, Ante Jerkunica and Allison Cook

Ollé's creative team included lighting designer Urs Schönebaum, who gave a moody edge to Alfons Flores' uncluttered sets. Lluc Castells' costumes came into their own in the ballroom scene where there was an uncomfortable juxtaposition between the Prince's world with the women in shimmering ballgowns – their long trains tugging at the carpet of leaves – and the homeless people, dressed all in green to match the furniture they sat on. Their invisibility illustrated the powerful message at the heart of this production. **ON**

JANÁČEK

The Makropulos Case

Malmö Opera (Sweden)
MUSIC ★★★
STAGING ★★

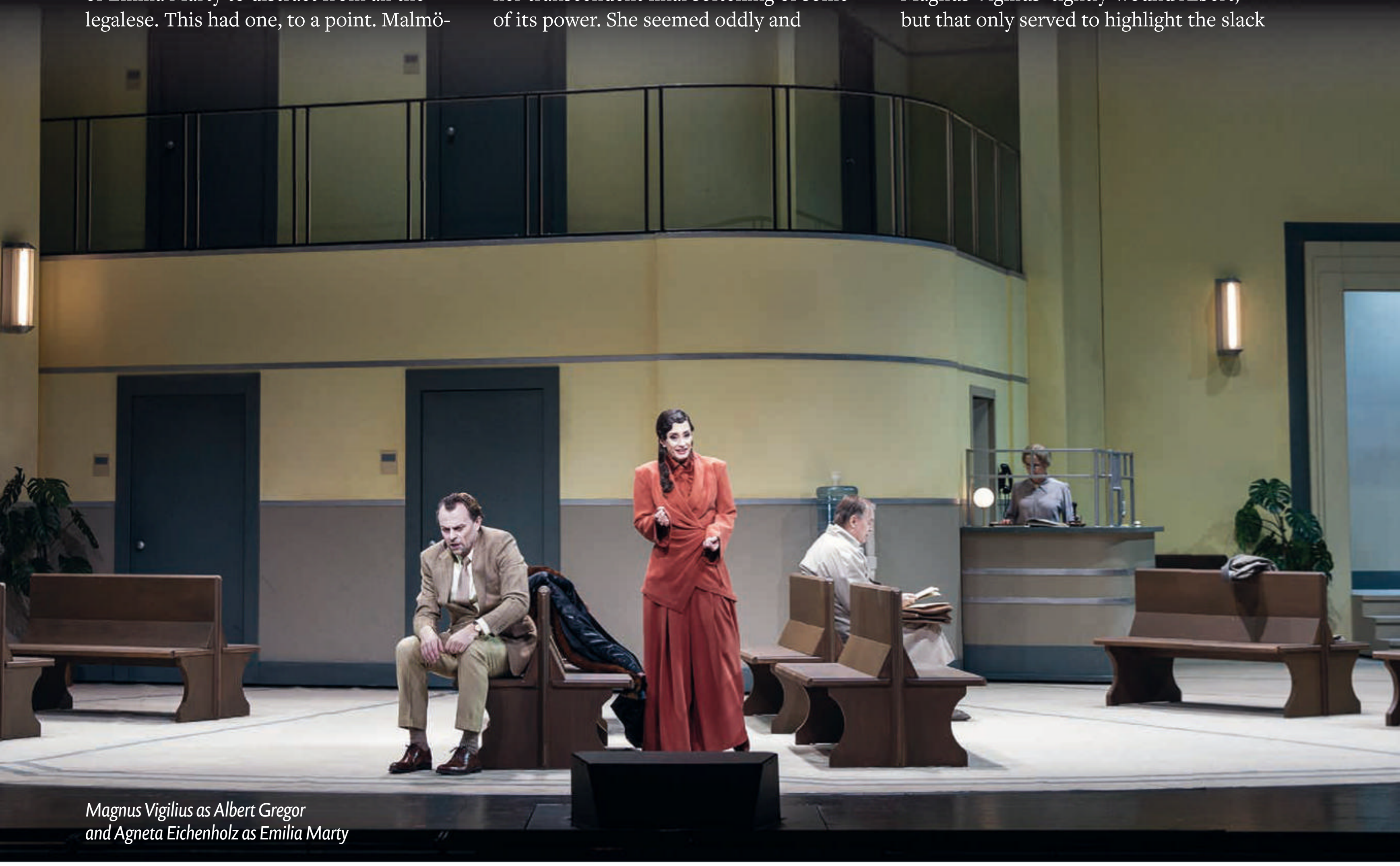
Review by Andrew Mellor • Photography by Emmalisa Pauly

Janáček's operas remain a relative rarity in Scandinavia but Malmö Opera has some distinguished recent history with the composer. Orpha Phelan's high-impact staging of *Jenůfa* here in 2011 made it on to a well-received DVD. The company's new take on *The Makropulos Case* by Elisabeth Linton – the Swede who now runs the Royal Danish Opera – didn't fare so well. First it was cancelled by the Covid-19 pandemic. Then, after a three-year wait, it underwhelmed.

Any rendition of this verbose opera needs a magnetic artist in the pivotal role of Emilia Marty to distract from all the legalese. This had one, to a point. Malmö-born Agneta Eichenholz is best known for leading Christof Loy's 2009 Covent Garden production of *Lulu* (also on DVD). There are numerous parallels here, in the figure of a mysterious *femme fatale* but also in Eichenholz's embodying of her. If her Lulu was intriguingly unreadable, her Emilia Marty had flashes of the same emotional detachment but otherwise gave away too much, too soon.

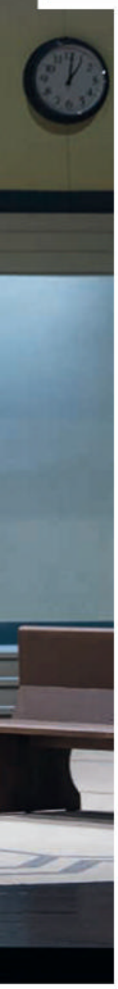
Eichenholz did a nice line in weariness – we felt the pain behind the poise from the start – but could feel too emotionally susceptible in Act 1, robbing her transcendent final softening of some of its power. She seemed oddly and inconsistently directed, with insufficient props or scenery for support. The huge coat she wore in Act 1 (more bohemian than glamour puss) was taken on and off to the point of farce. And there's no way a woman of her presence, confidence or deportment would have felt the need to swish it ostentatiously when leaving a room.

Eichenholz sang with precision and point. Her soprano hasn't quite the sparkle and agility it brought to Lulu 14 years ago but it holds no fear of the notes. Things were cooking in her Act 2 scene with Magnus Vigilius' tightly-wound Albert, but that only served to highlight the slack



Magnus Vigilius as Albert Gregor and Agneta Eichenholz as Emilia Marty

Mathias Hedegaard as Janek with Hanna Husáhr as Krista, Agneta Eichenholz as Emilia Marty and Thomas Volle as Vitek



Rodion Pogossov as Jaroslav Prus and Agneta Eichenholz as Emilia Marty

elsewhere, a general deficiency in the sort of manic energy and movement this opera lives by. Julia Hansen's set for Act 1 looked good – channeling a grey Eastern European bureaucracy that reflected Marty's tiredness with life – but without more people to fill it, was too big and too pale to match the music's frantic, intense focus. The set for Acts 2 and 3 just looked horrid: ponderous and ill conceived, too wide to focus the drama yet somehow still lost on the colossal Malmö stage.

That was thankfully resolved in the opera's transcendent final minutes, when the set was revolved to reveal its bare behind, pushed to the rear and back-lit as if to break the illusion that had hoodwinked everyone until now. From here it was down to the music. Eichenholz gave us some radiance but there wasn't nearly enough of it from the pit. Conductor Patrik Ringborg was good on woodwind and brass detail but this was not an idiomatic reading, only sporadically managing that combination of mechanical energy and stealth lyricism that underpins Janáček's score. And where was the chorus? At home, apparently.

It was difficult to find much fault in the almost entirely Scandinavian cast, though only Vigilius could match Eichenholz for charisma, nuance and watchability. The towering Lars Arvidson was a decent Kolenatý, Rodion Pogossov an effective and sleazy Prus and Thomas Volle an animated Vítek. It was the two youngsters who really impressed: Mathias Hedegaard's Janek drawn well by body and voice; a Hanna Husáhr's Krista painting a moving portrait of a proto-Marty. Like Vigilius, they had the measure of their roles and seemed at ease with the tone of the production – in a way that Eichenholz, for all her qualities, did not. **ON**

CITY FOCUS

Vienna

Jörg Schneider as Iro, Robert Bartneck as Eumete and Georg Nigl as Ulisse

© WIENER STAATSOPER / MICHAEL PÖHN

Vienna State Opera

There's a case to be made for a bit of Regietheater when it adds to an evening's opera enjoyment. But sometimes things are best left alone. Take the new production of the Vienna State Opera's ***Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*** by Monteverdi, where overreach in staging was only partially offset by a stellar cast, and an orchestral interpretation that did honours to Claudio Monteverdi's musical genius.

That the lead team faced a challenge is indisputable: how to take a more than 350-year-old opera based on a myth written over two millennia ago and make it relevant to today's audience. The best choice might have been to leave it alone.

There's enough psychological drama in the characters of both the adventurer Ulysses returning home after 10 years of war and a 10-year odyssey and Penelope, his faithful wife, resisting a bevy of suitors to carry it through most of its more than three hours. Instead of its clutter, an understated stage with a few Doric columns and a frescoed wall would have allowed the audience to focus on the excellent interpretations by Georg Nigl (Ulysses) and Kate Lindsey (Penelope). Conversely, directors Jossi Wieler and Sergio Morabito and stage designer Anna Viebrock could have opted to put the emphasis on visual extravagance. Rapidly changing scenes in an opera of drawn-out set pieces would have improved the pacing of a work that to modern ears occasionally approaches tedium despite its musical beauty. They chose another way, attempting to drag the story closer to the 21st century. It didn't work.

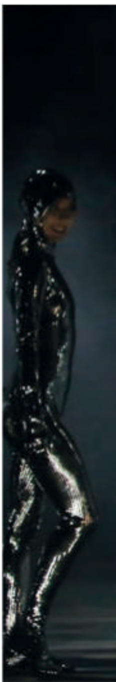
Georg Nigl as Ulisse in Il ritorno d' Ulisse in patria

© WIENER STAATSOPER / MICHAEL PÖHN

The curtain rose on what appeared to be a garbage dump, and it stayed that way until the end. The singers picked their way – and sometimes seemed to lose it – through old office furniture, wooden crates, a tennis umpire's chair, and other clutter. The loom on centre stage made sense, even if not as intended as a metaphor for the main characters' search for identity, but as a reminder of the Fates in Greek mythology weaving the threads of human destiny. The business-class aeroplane seats also worked as modern-day chariots, bringing the gods indolently lounging in them from Mount Olympus to Earth.

As for the costuming and makeup, it ranged from hodgepodge modern to inadvertently comic. With her sunglasses, Lindsey awakened unfortunate associations with Trinity in *Matrix* at least from Row 12, seat two, and Minerva (Isabel Signoret) in blueface with one of *Avatar*'s Na'vi.

Lindsey shone in voice and mimicry, turning Penelope's opening lament over her missing husband into a gripping mad scene that took up much of Act 1. Her



BARBARA PÁLFFY/VOLKSOPER WIEN

mezzo embraced the full range of emotions from a bitter queen railing against her fate in her opening 'Di misera regina' to the melancholy passages of 'O delle mie fatiche', the soaring final duet with Nigl that celebrates their reunion. Nigl was her perfect match with a supple baritone and dramatic skills portraying the king of Ithaca in defeat, defiance, and everything in between. Pablo Heras-Casado conducted the Concerto Musicus Wien with all the verve and imagination demanded of a score such as this, adding radiance to an evening of darkness and light – but mostly light.

★★★

George Jahn

Volksoper Wien

In his new operetta ***Die letzte Verschwörung*** (The Last Conspiracy), German composer **Moritz Eggert** (born 1965) walks a compositional tightrope between humour and profundity. Commissioned and directed by Lotte de Beer – director of Volksoper Wien since September 2022 – and premiered in March 2023, Eggert's opera is a surreal, absurdist romp that invites us to ask deep questions about the very nature of what we, as humans, construe as 'reality'. Together with de Beer, Eggert creates a theatre event, and techno-spectacular, that investigates what *might* constitute truth.

The starting point is a TV show – the guest is a flat-earther, Dieter Urban (played by Orhan Yildiz), the host Friedrich Quant. Quant, wonderfully sung and acted by Timothy Fallon, is the main protagonist; the interview is but the beginning of his encounters with a host of conspiracy theories, all of which might be true. His initially monodimensional *Weltanschauung* is shattered, his family do not recognise him, he takes a lover, and that's just the start. Androids, aliens and a plot to control humanity through the 6H network (think 5G, up a little) all join the party; as does a plot to turn humans into reptiles during sex, an alien abduction, and a restaurant gruesomely serving dead body parts as pizza toppings.

Is reality an illusion? In conversation with me, Eggert quoted Stephen Hawking's late work on reality as an holographic projection, run by the 'system' (played by Rebecca Nelsen). At the end, the director comes on stage and asks for more feeling, shattering the audience's deep involvement. Nothing is what it seems; an all-seeing, Illuminati eye appears; even Men in Black are here. Quant has an affair with 'Lara Lechner' – Nelsen again, the stand-out performance of the evening, utterly assured both dramatically, and in Eggert's demanding vocal writing. Wallis Giunta excels as Quant's wife, Elisabeth, and the Russian oligarch Natalya.

Eggert's music is a masterclass in assurance (he has written a raft of stage works); it is also important for him that his music is not, as he put it, exclusively for an audience 'who know the secret codes of contemporary music'. Initially appealing, once one moves below the surface, layer upon layer appears (much like the plot's layered search for a conspiracy). In addition to a riff on conspiracy theories, this is a love story, a comedy, and science fiction; Eggert's music touches on pop music, Muzak, Broadway choruses, jazz, and Minimalism; a chameleon score less ironic post-modernism, more exploration of memory (as Mozart and his contemporaries, did – think *Don Giovanni*) – and to where remembered ideas and concepts can be taken. Stage design is by Christof Herzer, who created the little worlds in which the increasingly bizarre scenes play out (Jorine van Beek's vivid costumes help; de Beer's direction is faultless.

The orchestra of the Volksoper was in superb form under Steven Sloane; fast, high violin lines were astonishingly together. Video design by Roman Hansi was inspired and perfectly executed.

The work verges on genius; asking deep questions of ourselves in the guise of slapstick, all held within a multivalent musical system. Eggert calls *Die letzte Verschörung* a 'Mythos-operette' (perhaps invoking the ghost of Offenbach's *Orpheus*). The piece remains deliciously unclassifiable, fitting for a piece that calls everything – absolutely everything – into question. **ON**

★★★★★

Colin Clarke

Timothy Fallon as Friedrich Quant and Orhan Yildiz as Dieter Urban in Die letzte Verschwörung

BARBARA PÁLFFY/VOLKSOPER WIEN

Timothy Fallon as Friedrich Quant in Die letzte Verschwörung

COMPANY FOCUS

Greek National Opera, Athens

Review by Helena Matheopolous • Photography by Andreas Simopoulos and Marilena Stafylidou

Anna Pirozzi as Medea

David McVicar's 'magnificent staging'

Cherubini – *Medea*

David McVicar's magnificent staging of the Italian version of Cherubini's *Medea* was one of the undisputed highlights of GNO's 2022/23 season. Part of an important international co-production with Chicago Lyric Opera, Canadian Royal Opera and the Metropolitan Opera, it was a worthy inauguration of GNO's series of celebratory Events honouring the 100th anniversary of the death of Maria Callas.

Musically near-perfect, dramatically gripping to the nth degree, it is also visually stunning – with a highly original set by the director himself, (aided by brilliant projection designer S Katy Tucker), dominated by a giant 11 meter long, nine meter wide mirror, set at an angle along the back of the stage and reflecting the projected action taking place front-stage as well as providing a glimpse of the walled town of Corinth as a background. The Wedding Scene, a highly romantic sight with Glauce's wedding dress and its endless train (by costume designer Doey Lüthi), unfolding along the mirror-reflected procession to the temple, was a feast to the senses. And very seldom has one seen an all-consuming fire as spectacular as the one provided by McVicar's award-winning lighting designer, Paule Constable.

Musically it was a major triumph for Italian soprano Anna Pirozzi, after success as Leonora in *Forza del destino* in Paris and her recent *Turandot* at Covent Garden. No one could have guessed that she was tackling this sacred monster of a role, rescued from oblivion and immortalised by Maria Callas, for the first time in her career. Pirozzi sang the long, flowing legato phrases with exquisitely pure, lyric sound, interrupted by aptly sharper notes for Medea's short, abrupt exclamations of '*crudel*' before returning to the soft, sweet sound with which she hopes to change Jason's mind.

McVicar displayed his deep understanding of ancient Greek drama, where violence was never performed onstage but reported by messengers or the chorus, by having Medea kill her children offstage, inside the temple and emerge from it with a blood-stained knife.

Jason was the Italian tenor Giorgio Berrugi, and although he sang well and acted the role convincingly – down to Jason's momentary response to Medea's reminiscences of their love in her opening aria – the role demands a larger, meatier voice to make a memorable impact.

Bass-baritone Yanni Yannissis was effective as Creonte, both vocally and dramatically, convincingly projecting this character's two facets – the mighty but also reluctantly and partly merciful King. Actor and bass Nikolas Douros was a welcome and impactful newcomer as the Captain of the Guard and the two maids were more than satisfyingly performed by Despoina Skarlatou and Martha Sotiriou.

The unexpected revelation of the evening was the Neris of the hitherto little-known mezzo Nefeli Kotseli, possessor of a rich, velvety and obviously expertly trained mezzo voice. Hopefully we will hear a lot more of her in the future.

The Chorus, so important in this opera, as indeed in straight Greek drama, excelled itself under its energetic chorus master Agathangelos Georgakatos. The orchestra, under Philippe Auguin, highlighted this beautiful score's references to both the classical era – with its occasional echoes of Mozart and Gluck – and to the then burgeoning *bel canto* school, eloquently.

MUSIC ★★★★★
STAGING ★★★★★

Massenet – *Werther*

This was a much awaited revival (by Ion Kessoulis) of a production by the distinguished late stage and operatic director Spyros Evangelatos.

The set, by George Patsas, is mostly soft-grey for the outdoor scenes, with mist and light grey clouds, darkening in the more dramatic moments. This set is also the background for the pub scene and all other outdoor encounters. Charlotte's home in the second half of the opera is cold and oozes the lovelessness of her marriages (on her side, at least!).

Werther's deathbed

The cast was headed by Anita Rachvelishvili, one of today's greatest mezzos, as Charlotte, and the Italian light lyric tenor Francesco Demuro – a firm favourite here – as Werther. Both were not exactly right for their roles, as far as the basic characteristics of French style are concerned, both in terms of size and vocal timbre. This was most obvious in the first two acts, where Rachvelishvili's rich, ample voice sounded beautiful, as it always does, but wrong for this role, which needs a smaller, more contained instrument with the sense of measure essential to French opera.

Demuro seemed challenged, with some high notes sounding strained, and his French, although a lot better than anticipated, left a lot to be desired in his first aria. Nikos Kotenidis, the baritone cast in the thankless role of Albert (Charlotte's fiancé and husband) was excellent throughout, as was Yanni Yannissis in the role of the Bailiff and Chrissa Maliamani, who played a cute Sophie. The children's chorus was excellent and beautifully trained both vocally and dramatically by its chorus master Konstantina Pitsiakou. The orchestra, under Jacques Lacombe, played well and idiomatically throughout, but was too loud at some moments when the singers would have welcomed its help.

Then everything changed in the second half. The protagonists delivered performances of unstinting, total commitment, singing and acting with their hearts, souls and guts and really thrilling us all, forgetting previous doubts and quibbles.

Demuro delivered Werther's famous aria *Pourquoi me réveiller* with utterly convincing passion and vocal thrust, excellent diction, and reached its climax with a wonderful sense of drama. Rachvelishvili also tempered the size of her voice and brought out just the right colours for these tragic, mournful scenes. She also proved herself a probing and convincing actress.

In the end, the spirit of the work and its essential truth came out and shone through, and the cast was rewarded by protracted and well deserved applause. **ON**

MUSIC ★★★★

STAGING ★★★★

Werther and Charlotte (Francesco Demuro and Anita Rachvelishvili)

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CITY FOCUS

Tokyo

Review by Yukiko Kishinami • Photography by Rikimaru Hotta/New National Theatre, Tokyo

The serene ending of Aida *at New National Theatre Tokyo*

Irene Roberts as Amneris in Aida

National New Theatre Tokyo – *Rigoletto*

New National Theatre Tokyo's (NNTT) new production of **Verdi's *Rigoletto*** welcomed back Italian maestro Maurizio Benini, 25 years after conducting *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in 1998 during the theatre's opening season. Every nuance and tempo change by Benini maintained a Verdian authenticity, breathing life into the music as he lead a responsive Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra. Their poignantly grave overture was an ominous prelude to the tragedy to come.

The addition of this intense, well-calculated production, directed by Emilio Sagi, is one of the fruits of a collaboration between Spanish artists and the NNTT's artistic director Kazushi Ono – music director of Barcelona Symphony Orchestra since 2015.

The drama unfolds inside Ricardo Sánchez Cuerda's partly gothic, partly warehouse-style dystopian sets featuring a steeply raked stage. It was dramatically lit by Eduardo Bravo, the red light on the stage front at the beginning of Act 1 providing the illusion of a massacre. Red continued to hold symbolism as Miguel Crespí also dressed Rigoletto in the colour.

Roberto Frontali led the wonderful cast as the hunched jester, Rigoletto. The Italian baritone's voice maintained radiance even on higher notes, making him an ideal choice for a doomed buffoon required to showcase a wide range of emotions. Armenian singer Hasmik Torosyan, whose angelic soprano very much suits Gilda, started a little tentatively in Act 1 but gave an increasingly assured performance in later acts. Young Peruvian tenor Iván Ayón Rivas gave a superb Duke of Mantova, already showing maturity in skilfully controlling his brilliant voice.

Hidekazu Tsumaya, showed his versatility as the smart, no-nonsense Sparafucile. Kasumi Shimizu was rightly seductive as Maddalena. Male members of the New National Theatre Chorus helped to increase the tension.

With such a fine cast, the duets and quartets stood alone as musical gems with the final act quartet and trio the highlight.

★★★★

Aida

The 25th anniversary season of the New National Theatre Tokyo culminated with a revival of **Verdi's *Aida***. This monumental production premiered at the NNTT in 1998, directed and designed by Franco Zeffirelli for the opening season of the state theatre.

Since then, the ever-popular production featuring more than 300 performers and two horses has seen a revival at the theatre every five years.

Carlo Rizzi directed the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra in a faster tempo in the Act 2 triumphal march, a striking contrast to his delicate and exquisite rendering of quieter scenes.

›

Serena Farnocchia's unadulterated soprano was ideal for Aida, and Roberto Aronica played Radamès with the right amount of urgency.

Yet the star of the first night was Irene Roberts, whose mellifluous mezzo-soprano emphasised the character of this unique antagonist – a woman tormented by unrequited love.

Shingo Sudo as a robust Amonasro and versatile bass Hidekazu Tsumaya as Ramfis completed the well-balanced cast, not to forget the fine contribution by the New National Theatre Chorus, an integral part of Verdi's four-act opera.

★★★★

Tokyo Nikikai Opera – *Friedenstag*

Words for 'peace' appear in multiple languages on the stage backdrop, filling a circular space that eventually changes to an image of the Earth – the ending of the Japanese premiere of **Richard Strauss' *Friedenstag*** (Day of Peace) in a semi-staged performance was overwhelmingly touching.

Even though Tokyo Nikikai Opera announced the production in the autumn of 2021, the production and music held timely resonance as it staged the one-act opera, focused around the peaceful end of a war, premiered in 1938 in Munich during the Nazi regime.

The story depicts the anguish of the military commander of a city under siege during the Thirty Years War in 17th-century Germany. He knows his men and townsfolks no longer want the war, but he is ordered by the military to fight on. The music starts ominously in D minor but develops into a grand choral piece in C major toward the end.

Tokyo Nikikai Opera, which celebrated its 70th anniversary last year, is no novice to staging premieres, having given Japanese premieres of more than 20 operas, including Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Die ägyptische Helena* and *Daphne*.

Jun Märkl found the right balance between the singers and the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra on stage. The all-Japanese cast was led by baritone Yuma Shimizu, whose solid and sincere singing suited the protagonist. Soprano Maki Nakamura gave heartfelt singing as his wife, Maria, and bass-baritone Teppei Kono was a compassionate commander of the force laying the siege.

Tenor Tatsundo Ito was outstanding as the town mayor.

The director, Maiko Ota, let the singers sing in formal concert attire in the oratorio-like latter part. It was the right decision given the almost Beethoven-like simplicity of the music. **ON**

★★★★★

Roberto Frontali as Rigoletto and Hasmik Torosyan as Gilda in Rigoletto

The opening of Rigoletto

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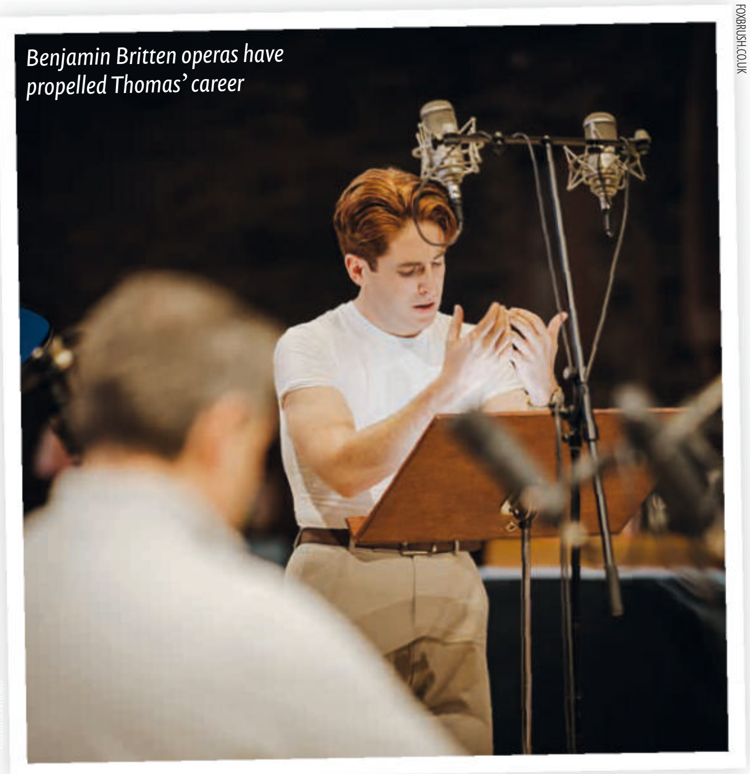
Pride unveiled

By Hattie Butterworth

A new album from tenor Elgan Llŷr Thomas celebrates homosexuality through art song

'I don't even think that most people are aware that Michelangelo was gay or that he was probably the first poet to write anything explicitly between two men.' And if they don't, tenor Elgan Llŷr Thomas hopes his new album, *Unveiled* on Delphian Records, might portray the Renaissance polymath genius in a different light. The more Thomas discusses the recording's programme, the more it feels that bringing his identity to the song world is about freedom: 'Ever since I started thinking about this album I've changed my entire outlook on what I would like to achieve in my life as a singer. As much as I love singing Italian opera or Britten or lighter roles in Wagner – this project is fully me.'

An exploration of queerness, celebrating gay identity through the medium of art song, *Unveiled* is a project you'd expect may have been done many times over. But queer identity and expression is a rarely celebrated and explored paradigm in classical recording and art song. Many opera fans (and artists) identified as gay a long time before it was possible for opera to address queerness directly. But Thomas believes there is a distinct empathy at play when performing music and texts selected and written by gay composers: 'All the biggest successes I've had in my career have come after singing Britten. I've done five roles and each time it spring-boarded me to something else. I think I can't ignore that anymore because I'm clearly doing something in that which I am not able to do in Italian repertoire.'



Benjamin Britten operas have propelled Thomas' career

FOXBRUSH.CO.UK

The premiere recording of a new English translation of Benjamin Britten's *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* begins the album. Written for and performed with Britten's partner Peter Pears, the 1942 premiere of the work at the Wigmore Hall was sung in Italian, putting a distance between the explicitly passionate text and its homoerotic themes, 25 years before the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality with the Sexual Offences Act of 1967.

> *'Knowing more about the artist only enhances the listener's experience'*

'Britten chose to set them for Pears in Italian so that what they were saying was disguised. – I kind of love that.'

It sits alongside the premiere recording of Ruth Gipps' *Four Songs of Youth*, setting poems of bisexual war poet Rupert Brooke. Then there's Tippett, another 20th-century composer known to have struggled with his homosexual identity. His *Songs for Achilles* for Tenor and Guitar, performed with Craig Ogden, takes one of Achilles' lustful songs from Act 2 of Tippett's opera *King Priam*.

'Craig actually worked with Tippett personally a few times,' Thomas tells me, 'and my pianist Iain (Burnside) knew Peter Pears, so it was really amazing to have some context and personal stories. It felt like it brought me closer to them, because I feel so far away in terms of culture.'

Following the Tippett is perhaps the bravest statement of them all – a cycle of eight songs, *Swan*, composed by Thomas himself with words by Andrew McMillan.

'I did a composition elective in my undergrad. But that's basically it.' Thomas is self-effacing when it comes to his composition talent. 'I said to Ian, "I like doing this, but you need to tell me if you think that they're no good!" '

After much back and forth between Thomas and Burnside, *Swan* secured its place on the album. 'Obviously they're not Britten, but they are their own thing. Not only did I want my literal voice on the album but also wanted to have my own music on there because it reinforces "this is who I am" even more – they're also the thing I'm most nervous about.'

A morphing of personal life and musical career isn't always encouraged. But for Thomas, this project is serving the audience, and the composers whose homosexual identities were complex or repressed.

'It doesn't just have to be me singing some Roger Quilter songs about flowers and hedgerows. It can be more dynamic and more relevant to people. Knowing more about the artist, as long as it's within reason and taste, only enhances the listener's experience. I am very deliberately releasing the album in Pride Month in the hope that will give me the best platform to reach people who wouldn't normally listen to it.'

So to wider opera and the realisations that ignited this project in the first place for Thomas: 'I was getting so frustrated with never having any repertoire that feels like it was written for me necessarily – other than Britten. But even Britten is so under the surface – it's not loud and proud, it's dark and twisted. Or the characters are outsiders in that way.

'There aren't enough new operas being written that are diverse in the first instance – of course, traditional opera can be cast with people from different nationalities, sexualities and identities but we don't have enough written that actually *has* to be cast in that way because of the stories that those people are telling.'

Thomas's distinct witness as an artist emerges: to approach art and sexuality unapologetically, championing underrepresented voices and opening opera to a new audience through pride of identity above all else. **ON**

Elgan Llŷr Thomas' Unveiled *is released on 23 June on the Delphian label, DCD 34293*

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CDs and digital

Opera Rara's indefatigable work has truly helped in the restoration of Mercadante's reputation. Audiences are now more engaged with the idea that there are riches beyond a mere handful of 19th-century Italian composers. This studio recording was made in conjunction with a concert performance and is very strong. Mercadante was working on reforming the structure of Italian opera, with enriched orchestration and less emphasis on set pieces and in one way *Il proscritto*, from 1842, is a slightly backward step: its biggest showpiece is a mezzo aria, a bravura explosion complete with cabaletta. But the composer was also writing for a very specific Neapolitan cast, so the vocal allocation of roles is interesting – the two men arguing operatically over the same woman are both tenors (admittedly not too unusual, as Rossini shows), but that woman is a mezzo and has an exciting and unusual duet with another mezzo. Conductor Carlo Rizzi came across the autograph score in the Naples Conservatory Library during lockdown and recognised its potential; the finales to Acts 1 and 2 are wonderfully constructed. Rizzi leads with a firm yet sensitive hand and his cast is excellent. Warring tenors Ramón Vargas and Iván Ayón-Rivas are well-contrasted, the former darker-toned, the latter brighter. The object of their affections is soft-grained mezzo Irene Roberts, contrasting with the brighter thrust of Elizabeth DeShong's voice – she sings the travesti role (and slays the big number). As ever, orchestra and chorus are top notch, and Opera Rara's presentation both informative and stylish.

Tenor Elgan Llŷr Thomas offers the first of three male solo recitals this month, each born of personal experience. As a young gay man, Thomas devotes his album to LGBTQ+ representation in music, focusing on gay composers and poets. Into this bracket fall obvious candidates like Britten, working when homosexuality was illegal in the UK although being in a tacitly accepted relationship with tenor Peter Pears. Less known is Ruth Gipps, herself not gay, but whose 1940 *Four Songs of Youth* are settings of poems by Rupert Brooke, though Gipps may have been unaware at the time of Brooke's bisexuality. An interesting inclusion is *To Gratiana dancing and singing* by William Denis Browne, who was with Brooke at his death and buried him, only to die himself a few weeks later at Gallipoli. We progress though Tippett's *Songs for Achilles*, which caused some fussing over lines by the Lord Chamberlain, and on to Elgan Llŷr Thomas' own composition *Swan*, eight short songs that are a nod to both the closeted Tchaikovsky and Matthew Bourne's all-male *Swan Lake*. They show off Thomas' range and clarion top as well as his excellent diction. He occasionally oversings and at times I felt shouted at rather than beguiled. Iain Burnside is the committed and passionate pianist. It is an interesting album on a fascinating theme.

Audiovisual

Like Mercadante, Porpora is enjoying something of a renaissance, with countertenors such as Max Emanuel Cenčić and Philippe Jaroussky devoting albums to him and Cecilia Bartoli championing him. The essentially comedic *L'Angelica*, 1720, based on Metastasio, is not strictly an opera but a serenata for stage, and was composed as a birthday present for Holy Roman Empress and Archduchess of Austria, Elisabeth Christine: let's hope she enjoyed it, as to aid fertility the poor woman was prescribed lashings of booze,

›

OperaNow RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Fallen to Dust

James Newby

BIS 2595

★★★★★

James Newby is based at the Hannover Staatsoper and also well-known as a recitalist. He sings here with his regular pianist, Joseph Middleton. Newby's works are chosen to honour the life of his late sister Laura, and he selects adroitly. Yes, there is huge emotion in some songs, not least the Finzi he sang at her funeral. But he doesn't just look back but also forwards with admirable positivity and at times humour to a life unlived. Newby starts with Dove's *All you who sleep tonight*, a simple and honest way to introduce his voice, as though he is testing the acoustic.

He soon ramps up the drama with Rebecca Clarke's *The Seal Man*, in which he and Middleton relish the emotional climax of the song, colouring both vocal and keyboard work with matching passion.

This is something Newby does with great skill: he sings Finzi's 'Come away, come away, death' with a light and pure tone, almost tenorial – likewise Somervell's 'On the idle hill of Summer' from *A Shropshire Lad*.

For Finzi's 'Fear no more the heat o' the sun' he erupts with a clarion bass-baritone, understandable as this is the song he sang at the funeral and it presumably retains a raw emotion for him.

But 'O Mistress Mine' then finds him employing a suave Kavalierbariton.

Newby offers potential Wagnerian credentials in Gurney's *By a Bierside*, set to Masefield's poem, in which the final cries of 'It is most grand to die' truly ring. But not everything is so serious, and he concludes with Wolseley Charles' 'The Green-Eyed Dragon' and relishes Greatrex Newman's madcap and witty words in a feast of story-telling.

In fact the words in the booklet are essentially redundant, such is Newby's perfect enunciation.

It is obviously a deeply personal recording and we are lucky that Newby is able to channel his emotions so positively.

BIS
Fallen to Dust
James Newby baritone
Joseph Middleton piano

Valedictory recital: James Newby

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Alpha 912

★★★★★

food and erotic art, which sounds fabulous but sadly meant she was permanently pickled and enormous to the point of immobility. (The effect of the paintings I do not know.) This performance, filmed in Martina Franca (2021) is good but not thrilling. Gianluca Falaschi's production is set around a long downlit table – and that's almost it. Costumes are contemporary with some nods to the 18th century and occasionally puppeteers manipulate a beast in the background. It is stylish for a short while, then monotonous. The singing is good under Federico Maria Sardelli's baton. Ekaterina Bakanova takes the title role and looks and sounds stylish. Paola Valentina Molinari has the better soprano part, including a delicious aria with cello obligato where both singer and instrumentalist maintain dramatic tension over 11 minutes. Teresa Iervolino's mezzo has warmth, and she provides that rare quality of being able to sing recitative that makes you engage rather than just glean information.

Another day, another *Tosca*. Thankfully this production is really worth watching. For the opening of La Scala's 2019 season, Davide Livermore took the mantra of 'go big or go home' to heart and his production is huge, traditional and lavish. Gigantic sets don't just rise, fall and revolve, but individual elements move independently. Cavaradossi's easel rests on a platform larger than my house – in fact, just his painting is larger than said hovel. Apparently things sometimes went wrong during performances, leading to some awkward pauses and stage intervention, but none of that is apparent here. To add to the visual overload the inventive camerawork is fluent (directed by Patrizia Carmine). This extravagant maelstrom requires a diva to dominate it and Anna Netrebko just about manages through sheer force of personality and large-scale vocals – she's on good form. She looks spectacular, particularly in Act 2's sky blue and claret empire line gown (I didn't have her down as a West Ham supporter). Francesco Meli's fine Cavaradossi gets a bit lost in the display and his tenor does not blend well with Netrebko's. Luca Salsi's baritone is stentorian and surprisingly refined when he wants, but he brings little new to the role. Riccardo Chailly restores Puccini's original thoughts, just a few bars here and there, which are mildly interesting but were wisely cut. The conducting is extraordinarily slow, which adds to the gargantuan scale of everything. I learned nothing new about *Tosca* or Tosca but it is all tremendously enjoyable.

Offenbach operettas are strange beasts and I can never fathom what makes one production work where another fails. This show, directed by Valérie Lesort for the Opéra Comique last year, is everything I think I would dislike – mugging, naff visual gags, Day-Glo costumes and sets – but I loved it.

The audience obviously laps it up and there are gales of laughter, and yes, sometimes I joined in. Who could resist a baritone in drag, a desperately randy Old Prisoner and, best of all, singing llamas? I realise it all sounds deeply unfunny so you will just have to trust me. Stéphanie d'Oustrac takes the title role with aplomb and a warm mezzo, generally looking cheerful through her travails and accidental drunkenness. Philippe Talbot's tenor is sweet and he makes much of his Act 3 aria; in fact the whole cast has a ball. Julien Leroy conducts with vigour and has a good sing-along with his cast at the curtain calls.

Benjamin Appl takes a more detached view of his theme of temptation in the modern world, its desires and consequences. His sometimes raised eyebrow is a blessing as it means he possesses an almost cinematic ability for when to zoom in on an emotion or when to maintain a cool distance. For example, in Hahn's *À Chloris* he floats an elegant line, whereas Kurt Weill's *Youkalli* has him pushing the text to the fore, and in Eisler's 'Die Ballade vom Paragraphen 218' he spits Brecht's bitter words with suitable desperation and venom.

Appl's baritone is clean and fine-limned. I get the impression he knows his strengths and very astutely plays to them – smooth tone, perfect diction, and a fabulous capacity for story-telling in a programme ranging from Schubert to Heggie. Like James Newby, nothing is thrown away. But where Newby's passions are elemental, Appl's are more intellectualised, though both singers offer much sophistication. Newby allows his emotions to show – Appl illuminates other people's. Both approaches are fascinating. Appl sinks with delight into the sensual world of Debussy's 'La Chevelure', set to Pierre Louÿs' erotic lines, but just as neatly conveys the purer Romantic musings of Fanny Hensel's 'Die Nonne'. He certainly strips any jauntiness from Casucci's *Just a gigolo*. Appl works with pianist James Baillieu, who provides an equal range of colours and knows when to take the limelight, when to sit back. One tiny cavil – the text of two songs is missing from the booklet of my review copy, hopefully since corrected. But it is a delicious album with an intriguing sense of sin. **ON**

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UNITED KINGDOM

LONDON

OPERA HOLLAND PARK

operahollandpark.com

La bohème | **Puccini**

JUL 19, 21, 23M, 25, 27, 29; AUG 01, 03, 05

Conductor George Jackson
Stage director Natascha Metherell
Set & Costume designer Madeleine Boyd
Lighting designer Charlie Morgan Jones

CAST

Mimì Katie Bird
Rodolfo Adam Gilbert / Joseph Buckmaster
Musetta Elizabeth Karani
Marcello Ross Ramgobin
Schaunard Harry Thatcher
Colline Barnaby Rea
Benoît / Alcindoro Henry Grant Kerswell
Parpignol Phillip Costovski

WORLD PREMIERE

Itch | **Dove**

JUL 22, 26, 28, 30M; AUG 02, 04

Conductor Jessica Cottis
Stage director Stephen Barlow
Set & Costume designer Frankie Bradshaw
Lighting designer Jake Wiltshire

CAST

Itchingham Lofte Adam Temple-Smith
Jack Lofte Natasha Agarwal
Jude Lofte / Roshanna Wing Rebecca Bottone
Nicholas Lofte Eric Greene
Bob Evert / Kinch Rob Burt
Cake / Berghahn James Laing
Watkins Victoria Simmonds
Nathaniel Flowerdew Nicholas Garrett

ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

roh.org.uk

Werther | **Massenet**

JUL 01, 04

Conductor Antonio Pappano
Stage director Benoît Jacquot
Set designer Charles Edwards
Costume designer Christian Gasc
Lighting designer Charles Edwards

CAST

Werther Jonas Kaufmann
Charlotte Aigul Akhmetshina
Sophie Sarah Gilford
Albert Gordon Bintner
Le Bailli Alastair Miles

Don Carlo | **Verdi**

JUL 03, 06, 09M, 12, 15

Conductor Bertrand de Billy
Stage director Nicholas Hytner
Set & Costume designer Bob Crowley
Lighting designer Mark Henderson

CAST

Filippo II John Relyea
Don Carlo Brian Jagde
Rodrigo Luca Micheletti
Il Grande Inquisitore Taras Shtonda
Elisabetta di Valois Lise Davidsen
Eboli Yulia Matochkina

Le nozze di Figaro | **Mozart**

JUL 08, 11, 14, 18, 20, 22

Conductor Joana Mallwitz
Stage director David McVicar
Set & Costume designer Tanya McCallin
Lighting designer Paule Constable
Choreographer Leah Hausman

CAST

Figaro Mattia Olivieri
Susanna Siobhan Stagg
Il Conte di Almaviva Stéphane Degout
La Contessa di Almaviva Hrachuhí Bassénz
Cherubino Anna Stephany
Bartolo Maurizio Muraro
Marcellina Dorothea Röschmann

ST JOHN'S, SMITH SQUARE

sjss.org.uk / regentsopera.com

Così fan tutte | **Mozart**

JUL 29

Conductor Ben Woodward
Stage director Sophie Gilpin
Designer Jessica Staton

CAST

Fiordiligi Christine Buras
Dorabella Olympia Hetherington
Ferrando Dominic J. Walsh
Guglielmo Christian Andreas
Don Alfonso Andrew Mayor
Despina Francesca Matta

Jonathan Doves' latest opera, Itch premiers at Holland Park

MARSHALL LIGHT STUDIO

EUROPE

AUSTRIA

BAD ISCHL

LEHÁR FESTIVAL

leharfestival.at

Madame Pompadour | **Fall**

JUL 08, 09M, 16M, 20M, 22, 26M, 29; AUG 02M, 04, 06M, 10, 16M, 19, 26

Conductor Christoph Huber
Stage director Thomas Enzinger
Choreographer Evamaria Mayer
Set designer Sabine Lindner
Costume designer Sven Bindseil

CAST

Die Marquise de Pompadour Julia Koci
Der König Claudiu Sola
René Maximilian Mayer
Madeleine Elisabeth Zeiler

BREGENZ

BREGENZ FESTIVAL

bregenzerfestspiele.com

Ernani | **Verdi**

JUL 03, 19, 23M, 31

Conductor Enrique Mazzola
Stage director Lotte de Beer
Set & Costume designer Christof Hetzer
Lighting designer Alex Brok
Choreographer Ran Braun

CAST

Ernani Saimir Pirgu
Don Carlo Igor Golovatenko
Don Ruy Gomez de Silva Goran Jurić
Elvira Guanqun Yu
Giovanna Aytaj Shikhalizada

Madama Butterfly | **Puccini**

JUL 20, 21, 22, 25-30; AUG 01-06, 09-13, 15, 16, 18-20

Conductor Enrique Mazzola
Stage director Andreas Homoki
Set designer Michael Levine
Costume designer Antony McDonald
Lighting designer Franck Evin
Video designer Luke Halls
Choreographer Lucy Burge

CAST

Cio-Cio-San Elena Guseva / Barno Ismatullaeva / Anna Princeva
B.F. Pinkerton Otar Jorjikia / Sergei Skorokhodov / Łukasz Załęski

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UK FESTIVAL OPERA

GLYNDEBOURNE FESTIVAL OPERA

glyndebourne.com

A Midsummer Night's Dream **| Britten**

JUL 01M, 06M, 11M, 16M, 22 M, 27M, 30M; AUG 05M, 08M, 13M, 17M, 22M

Conductor Dalia Stasevska
Stage director Sir Peter Hall
Set & Costume designer John Bury
Choreographer Lynne Hockney
Lighting designer Paul Pyant

CAST
Oberon Tim Mead
Tytania Liv Redpath / Soraya Mafi
Cobweb Ben Fletcher
Peaseblossom Arlo Murray
Lysander Caspar Singh
Demetrius Samuel Dale Johnson

Don Giovanni **| Mozart**

JUL 02M, 08M, 13M, 15M

Conductor Evan Rogister
Stage director Mariame Clément
Set & Costume designer Julia Hansen
Lighting designer Bernd Purkrabek
Video designer Etienne Guiol
The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

CAST
Don Giovanni Andrey Zhilikhovsky / Andrei Bondarenko
Il Commendatore Jerzy Butryn
Donna Anna Venera Gimadieva
Don Ottavio Oleksiy Palchykov
Donna Elvira Ruzan Mantashyan
Leporello Mikhail Timoshenko
Masetto Michael Mofidian
Zerlina Victoria Randem

Rigoletto **| Verdi**

JUL 02M, 08M, 13M, 15M

Conductor Evan Rogister
Stage director Mariame Clément
Set & Costume designer Julia Hansen
Lighting designer Bernd Purkrabek
Video designer Etienne Guiol
The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

CAST
Don Giovanni Andrey Zhilikhovsky / Andrei Bondarenko
Il Commendatore Jerzy Butryn
Donna Anna Venera Gimadieva
Don Ottavio Oleksiy Palchykov
Donna Elvira Ruzan Mantashyan
Leporello Mikhail Timoshenko
Masetto Michael Mofidian
Zerlina Victoria Randem

L'elisir d'amore **| Donizetti**

JUL 05M, 09M

Conductor Ben Gernon
Stage director Annabel Arden
Set & Costume designer Lez Brotherston
Choreographer Leah Hausman
Lighting designer Giuseppe di Iorio

ADOBESTOCK

CAST
Adina Nardus Williams
Nemorino Liparit Avetisyan / Matteo Desole
Belcore Biagio Pizzuti
Il dottore Dulcamara Renato Girolami

Dialogue des Carmélites **| Poulenc**

JUL 07M, 14M, 21M, 24M, 29M

Conductor Robin Ticciati
Stage director Barrie Kosky
Set & Costume designer Katrin Lea Tag

CAST
Marquis de la Force Paul Gay
Chevalier de La Force Valentin Thill
Blanche de La Force Sally Matthews
Madame de Croissy Katarina Dalayman
Sœur Constance de Saint-Denis Florie Valiquette
Mère Marie de L'incarnation Karen Cargill
Madame Lidoine Golda Schultz
Mère Jeanne de l'Enfant-Jésus Fiona Kimm

Semele **| Handel**

JUL 23M, 26M, 28M; AUG 01M, 03M, 06M, 09M, 11M, 16M, 19M, 24M, 26M

Conductor Václav Luks
Stage director Adele Thomas
Set designer Annemarie Woods
Costume designer Hannah Clark
Choreographer Emma Woods
Lighting designer Peter Mumford

CAST
Semele Joélle Harvey
Iris Samuel Mariño
Athamas Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen
Ino Stephanie Wake-Edwards
Juno Jennifer Johnston
Jupiter Stuart Jackson

GRIMEBORN FESTIVAL

arcolatheatre.com

Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor **| Nikolai**

JUL 19-22

Conductor Knut Erik Jensen
Stage director Kristin Lundemo Overøye / Lars Harald Maagerø
Set designer Fridtjof Brevig
Costume designer Fridtjof Brevig

CAST
Sir John Falstaff Mae Heydorn
Herr Fluth Patrick Egersborg
Herr Reich Mathilde Hofvind Borgen
Fenton Eldrid Gorset

LONGBOROUGH

lfo.org.uk

L'Orfeo **| Monteverdi**

JUL 11M, 13M, 15M, 16M, 18M

Conductor Robert Howarth
Stage director Olivia Fuchs
Set designer Nate Gibson
Lighting designer Tim Mitchell
Choreographer Clare Whistler

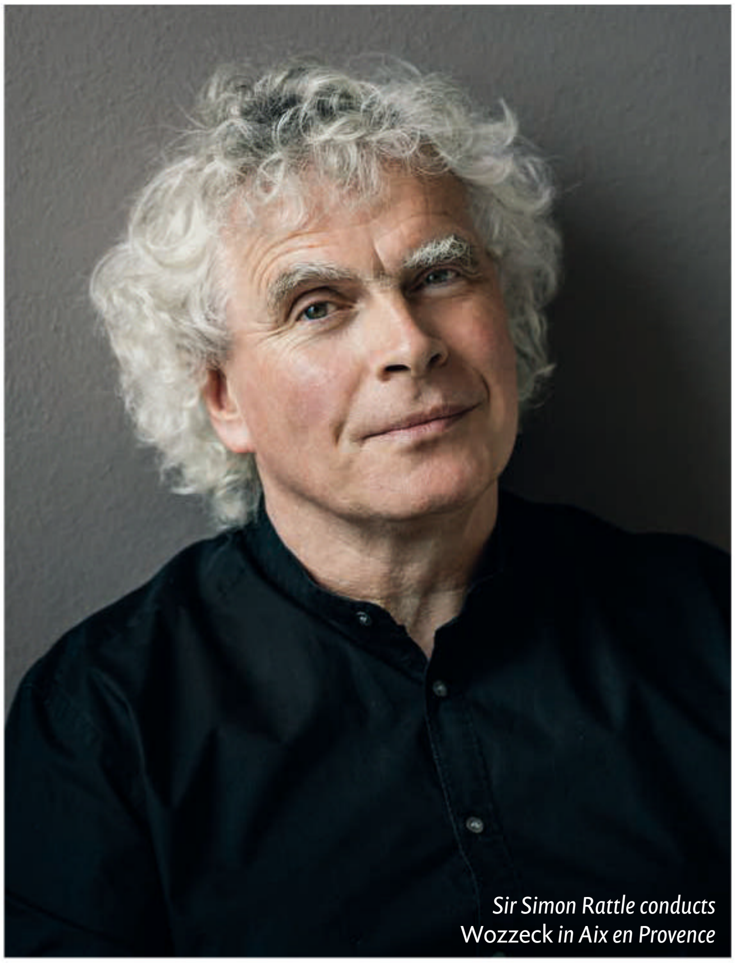
CAST
La Musica Caroline Taylor
La Ninfa Rosie Lomas
Orfeo Peter Gijsbertsen
Euridice Aoife Miskelly
La Messaggera / Proserpina Frances Gregory
La Speranza Sian Cameron
Caronte Freddie Tong
Plutone Julien Ségol
Apollo Seumas Begg

The Fairy Queen **| Purcell**

JUL 29M, 30M; AUG 01M, 03M

Conductor Harry Sever / Naomi Burrell
Stage director Polly Graham
Set designer Nate Gibson
Lighting designer Tim Mitchell
Choreographer Carmine De Amicis

CAST
Hermia Eleanor Broomfield
Titania / Hippolyta Rachel Speirs
Flute Alys Meredid Roberts
Puck / Snug Susie Parks
Helena Annie Reilly
Quince Angharad Rowlands
Theseus Lars Fischer
Lysander Peter Edge
Bottom George Robarts
Demetrius Luke Horner



OLIVER HELBIG

Sir Simon Rattle conducts Wozzeck in Aix en Provence

Suzuki Fleuranne Brockway Aytaj Shikhalizada / Annalisa Stroppa
Sharpless Domen Križaj / Brett Polegato / Yngve Søberg
Goro Spencer Lang / Taylan Reinhard

INNSBRUCK

TIROLER LANDESTHEATER

landestheater.at

La traviata | **Verdi**
JUL 02, 05, 07
Conductor Kerem Hasan
Stage director Magdalena Weingut
Set designer Helfried Lauckner
Costume designer Michael D Zimmermann

CAST
Violetta Valéry Susanne Langbein
Alfredo Germont Jon Jurgens
Giorgio Germont Daniel Luis de Vicente
Flora Bervoix Irina Maltseva

SALZBURG

SALZBURG FESTIVAL, HAUS FÜR MOZART

salzburgerfestspiele.at

Le nozze di Figaro | **Mozart**
JUL 27, 30M AUG 05, 11, 15, 17, 20M, 28
Conductor Raphaël Pichon
Stage director Martin Kušej
Set designer Raimund Orfeo Voigt
Costume designer Alan Hranitelj
Lighting designer Friedrich Rom
Dramaturge Olaf A Schmitt

CAST
Figaro Krzysztof Bączyk
Susanna Sabine Devieilhe
Il Conte di Almaviva Andrè Schuen
La Contessa di Almaviva Adriana González
Cherubino Léa Desandre
Bartolo Peter Kálmán
Marcellina Kristina Hammarström

SCHAUSPIELHAUS

schauspielhaus-salzburg.at

L'enfant et les sortilèges | **Ravel**
JUL 28M, 30M; AUG 02M, 05M, 09M, 12M, 15M, 19M, 23M, 27M
Conductor Anna Isabella Handler
Stage director Giulia Giammona
Set & Costume designer Selina Nowak

CAST
Maman Liza Lozica Vjera
Le Fauteuil Lilit Davtyan
La bergère Louis XV Aitana Sanz
La Théière Anthony León
La Tasse Chinoise Liza Lozica Vjera
Le Feu Aitana Sanz
La Princesse Lilit Davtyan

Macbeth | **Verdi**
JUL 29; AUG 06, 10, 14, 19M, 24
Conductor Franz Welser-Möst
Stage director Krzysztof Warlikowski
Set & Costume designer Małgorzata Szczęśniak
Lighting designer Felice Ross

CAST
Macbeth Vladislav Sulimsky
Lady Macbeth Asmik Grigorian
Banco Tareq Nazmi
Macduff Jonathan Tetelman

BELGIUM

ANTWERP

OPERA ANTWERP

operaballet.be

Le nozze di Figaro | **Mozart**
JUL 01, 04, 06
Conductor Marie Jacquot
Stage director Tom Goossens
Set designer Sammy Van den Heuvel
Costume designer Dotje Demuynck
Lighting designer Luc Schaltin

CAST
Figaro Božidar Smiljanić
Susanna Maeve Höglund
Il Conte di Almaviva Kartal Karagedik
La Contessa di Almaviva Eleanor Lyons
Cherubino Anna Pennisi

BULGARIA

SOFIA

SOFIA OPERA AND BALLET

operasofia.bg

Das Rheingold | **Wagner**
JUL 08
Conductor Constantin Trinks
Stage director Plamen Kartalov
Set designer Hans Kudlich
Lighting designer Andrey Haydinyak
Costume designer Hristiana Mihaleva

CAST tba

Die Walküre | **Wagner**
JUL 09
Conductor Constantin Trinks
Stage director Plamen Kartalov
Set designer Hans Kudlich
Lighting designer Andrey Haydinyak

CAST tba

Siegfried | **Wagner**
JUL 11
Conductor Constantin Trinks
Stage director Plamen Kartalov
Lighting designer Andrey Haydinyak

CAST tba

Götterdämmerung | **Wagner**
JUL 13
Conductor Constantin Trinks
Stage director Plamen Kartalov
Lighting designer Andrey Haydinyak
Set designer Hans Kudlich

CAST tba

DENMARK

COPENHAGEN

ROYAL DANISH OPERA

kglteater.dk

Margrethe | **Aagard**
JUL 01, 02M, 05-09M; AUG 03-06M, 10-13M
Conductor Mikkel Rønnow
Stage director Mads M. Nielsen
Set designer Benjamin La Cour
Sound designer Tim Hoyer
Lighting designer Tim Mitchell

CAST
HM Queen Margrethe II Ulla Henningsen / Xenia Lach-Nielsen
Princess Margrethe Emilie Groth
HRH Prince Henrik Peter Schröder
King Frederik IX Kristian Boland

FINLAND

SAVONLINNA

SAVONLINNA FESTIVAL

operafestival.fi

Roméo et Juliette | **Gounod**
JUL 01, 03, 05, 07, 12, 14, 17
Conductor Yves Abel
Stage director Amy Lane
Set & Costume designer Emma Ryott
Lighting designer Charlie Morgan Jones
Choreographer Michael Barry

CAST
Roméo Frédéric Antoun / Antonio Poli
Juliette Lisette Oropesa / Marjukka Tepponen
Frère Laurent Timo Riihonen
Mercutio Kevin Greenlaw
Gertrude Irina Nuutinen
Tybalt Sam Furness

Die Zauberflöte | **Mozart**
JUL 04, 06, 08, 11, 19, 21
Conductor Sakari Oramo
Stage director August Everding
Costume & Set designer Toni Businger

CAST
Tamino Johan Krogius / Tuomas Katajala
Papageno Markus Schwartz / Waltteri Torikka
Pamina Tuuli TakalaIris Candelaria
Königin der Nacht Anu Komsi
Sarastro Mika Kares

Il barbiere di Siviglia | **Rossini**
JUL 10, 13, 15, 18, 20, 22
Conductor Michele Gamba
Stage director Kari Heiskanen
Set designer Antti Mattila
Costume designer Teemu Muurimäki
Lighting designer William Iles

CAST
Il Conte d'Almaviva Vassilis Kavayas
Don Bartolo Marco Filippo Romano
Rosina Gayane Babajanyan
Figaro Ville Rusanen
Don Basilio Petri Lindroos

FRANCE

AIX EN PROVENCE FESTIVAL

festival-aix.com

THÉÂTRE DE L'ARCHEVECHÉ

Così fan tutte **| Mozart**

JUL 06, 08, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21

Conductor Thomas Hengelbrock
Stage director & Set designer Dmitri Tcherniakov
Costume designer Elena Zaitseva
Lighting designer Gleb Filshtinsky

CAST
Fiordiligi Agneta Eichenholz
Dorabella Claudia Mahnke
Despina Nicole Chevalier
Ferrando Rainer Trost
Guglielmo Russell Braun
Don Alfonso Georg Nigl

GRAND THÉÂTRE DE PROVENCE

Wozzeck **| Berg**

JUL 07, 10, 13, 18, 21

Conductor Simon Rattle
Stage director Simon McBurney
Set designer Miriam Buether
Costume designer Christina Cunningham
Lighting designer Paul Anderson
Video designer Will Duke
Choreographer Leah Hausman

CAST
Wozzeck Christian Gerhaher
Marie Malin Byström
Tambourmajor Thomas Blondelle
Andres Robert Lewis
Hauptmann Peter Hoare
Doktor Brindley Sherratt

BORDEAUX

OPÉRA NATIONAL DE BORDEAUX

opera-bordeaux.com

Porgy and Bess **| Gershwin**

JUL 06-08

Conductor Salvatore Caputo
Stage director Emmanuelle Bastet
Set designer Tim Northam
Costume designer Tim Northam
Lighting designer François Thouret

CAST
Porgy Joe Bertili
Bess Marie-Laure Garnier
Sportin' Life / Robbins Mitesh Khatri
Serena / Clara Axelle Fanyo

PARIS

OPÉRA NATIONAL DE PARIS

operadeparis.fr

Roméo et Juliette **| Gounod**

JUL 03, 04, 06, 07, 09M, 11, 12, 15

Conductor Carlo Rizzi
Stage director Thomas Jolly
Costume designer Sylvette Dequest
Lighting designer Antoine Travert
Set designer Bruno de Lavenère

CAST
Roméo Benjamin Bernheim / Francesco Demuro
Juliette Elsa Dreisig / Pretty Yende
Frère Laurent Jean Teitgen
Mercutio Huw Montague Rendall / Florian Sempey
Tybalt Maciej Kwaśnikowski
Stéphano Léa Desandre / Marina Viotti

VERSAILLES

OPÉRA ROYAL

chateauversailles-spectacles.fr

Jérusalem deliverée **| Philippe d'Orléans**
Concert performance

JUL 02

Conductor Leonardo García Alarcón

CAST
Herminie Marie Lys
Armide Véronique Gens
L'Occasion / The Voice of Clorinde / A Demon Gwendoline Blondeel
Renaud Cyrille Dubois

GERMANY

BAYREUTH

FESTSPIELHAUS BAYREUTH

Parsifal **| Wagner**

JUL 25M, 30M; AUG 12M, 15M, 19M, 23M, 27M

Conductor Pablo Heras-Casado
Stage director Jay Scheib
Set designer Mimi Lien
Costume designer Meentje Nielsen

CAST
Amfortas Derek Welton
Titurel Tobias Kehrer
Gurnemanz Georg Zeppenfeld
Parsifal Joseph Calleja
Klingsor Jordan Shanahan
Kundry Elīna Garanča / Ekaterina Gubanova

Die Walküre **| Wagner**

JUL 27M AUG 06M, 22M

Conductor Pietari Inkinen
Stage director Valentin Schwarz
Set designer Andrea Cozzi
Costume designer Andy Besuch
Lighting designer Reinhard Traub

CAST
Siegmund Klaus Florian Vogt
Sieglinde Emily Magee
Hunding Georg Zeppenfeld
Wotan Tomasz Konieczny
Fricka Christa Mayer
Brünnhilde Catherine Foster

Tannhäuser **| Wagner**

JUL 28M; AUG 07M, 16M, 20M, 28M

Conductor Nathalie Stutzmann
Stage director Tobias Kratzer
Set & Costume designer Rainer Sellmaier
Lighting designer Reinhard Traub
Video designer Manuel Braun

CAST
Hermann Dmitry Belosselskiy
Tannhäuser Stephen Gould
Wolfram Markus Eiche
Walther Siyabonga Maqungo
Biterolf Olafur Sigurdarson

Götterdämmerung **| Wagner**

JUL 31M; AUG 10M, 26M

Conductor Pietari Inkinen
Stage director Valentin Schwarz
Set designer Andrea Cozzi
Costume designer Andy Besuch
Lighting designer Reinhard Traub

CAST
Siegfried Stephen Gould
Gunther Michael Kupfer-Radecky
Hagen Dmitry Belosselskiy
Alberich Olafur Sigurdarson
Brünnhilde Catherine Foster
Gutrune Emily Magee
Waltraute Christa Mayer

BERLIN

DEUTSCHE OPER

deutscheoperberlin.de

Aida **| Verdi**

JUL 01, 06

Conductor Leonardo Sini / Giampaolo Bisanti
Stage director Benedikt von Peter
Costume designer Lene Schwind
Set designer Katrin Wittig

CAST
Aida Dinara Alieva / Christina Nilsson
Il Re d'Egitto Tobias Kehrer
Amneris Anna Smirnova / Clémentine Margaine
Radamès Jorge Puerta / Alfred Kim
Amonasro Jordan Shanahan
Ramfis Byung Gil Kim

Lohengrin **| Wagner**

JUL 02M

Conductor Ivan Repušić
Stage director Kasper Holten
Set designer Steffen Aarfing
Costume designer Steffen Aarfing
Lighting designer Jesper Kongshaug

CAST
Lohengrin Attilio Glaser
Elsa von Brabant Flurina Stucki
Friedrich von Telramund Thomas Johannes Mayer
Ortrud Anna Smirnova

Nabucco **| Verdi**

JUL 04, 07

Conductor Carlo Montanaro
Stage director Keith Warner
Set designer Tilo Steffens
Costume designer Julia Müer

CAST
Nabucco Dalibor Jenis
Abigaille Maria José Siri
Fenena Karis Tucker

DRESDEN

SEMPEROPER DRESDEN

semperoper.de

The Queen of Spades **| Tchaikovsky**

JUL 01, 05, 08, 12, 15

Conductor Mikahail Tatarnikov
Stage director Andreas Dresen
Set designer Mathias Fischer-Dieskau
Costume designer Judith Adam

CAST
Herman Sergei Polakov
Graf Tomsky John Lundgren
Knyaz Yeletsky Christoph Pohl
Chekalinsky Aaron Pegram

Tenor Klaus Florian Vogt is Siegmund in Beyreuth

VIENNA STATE OPERA/MICHAEL POHN

Der Freischütz **| Weber**
JUL 02, 04, 07, 13
Conductor Antonello Manacorda
Stage director Axel Köhler
Set designer Arne Walther
Costume designer Katharina Weissenborn
Lighting designer Fabio Antoci
CAST
Ottokar Sebastian Wartig
Kuno Matthias Henneberg
Agathe Johanni van Oostrum
Ännchen Nikola Hillebrand
Kaspar Günther Groissböck
Max Stanilas de Barbeyrac
Kilian Ilya Silchuk

FRANKFURT

OPER FRANKFURT

oper-frankfurt.de

Madama Butterfly **| Puccini**
JUL 01, 08, 13, 19
Conductor Pier Giorgio Morandi
Stage director RB Schlather
Costume designer Doey Lüthi
Set designer Johannes Leiacker
Lighting designer Olaf Winter
CAST
Cio-Cio-San Alexandra Marcellier / Corinne Winters
B.F. Pinkerton Stefan Pop / Rodrigo Porras Garulo / AJ Glueckert
Suzuki Bianca Andrew / Kelsey Lauritano

LEIPZIG

OPERNHAUS LEIPZIG

opera-leipzig.de

Das Geheimnis der schwarzen Spinne **| Judith Weir**
JUL 01M, 02M
Conductor Sophie Bauer
Stage director Philipp J Neumann
Costume designer Nicola Minssen
CAST tba

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg **| Wagner**
JUL 02, 09
Conductor Christoph Gedschold
Stage director David Pountney
Lighting designer Fabrice Kebour
Costume designer Marie-Jeanne Lecca
Set designer Leslie Travers
Choreographer Denni Sayers
CAST
Eva Elisabet Strid
David Matthias Stier
Walther von Stolzing Tomislav Mužek
Sixtus Beckmesser Mathias Hausmann
Hans Sachs James Rutherford

MUNICH

BAVARIAN STATE OPERA

staatsoper.de

Luisa Miller **| Verdi**
JUL 03, 06, 10, 22
Conductor Anthony Bramall
Stage director Torsten Fischer
Set designer Herbert Schäfer
Costume designer Vasilis Triantafillopoulos
CAST
Miller Matija Meić
Luisa Jennifer O'Loughlin
Il conte di Walter In-ho Jeong
Rodolfo Alexandros Tsilogiannis
Federica Anna Agathonos
Wurm Timos Sirlantzis

Aida **| Verdi**
JUL 23, 27, 30
Conductor Daniele Rustioni
Stage director Damiano Michieletto
Set designer Paulo Fantin
Costume designer Carla Teti
Lighting designer Alessandro Carletti
CAST
Aida Elena Stikhina
Il Re d'Egitto Alexandros Stavrakakis
Amneris Anita Rachvelishvili
Radamès Brian Jagde
Amonasro Luca Salsi
Ramfis Alexander Köpeczi

NATIONALTHEATER

nationaltheater-mannheim.de

Hamlet **| Dean**
JUL 01, 05, 09, 12
Conductor Vladimir Jurowski
Stage director Neil Armfield
Set designer Ralph Myers
Costume designer Alice Babidge
Lighting designer Jon Clark
CAST
Hamlet Allan Clayton
Ophelia Caroline Wettergreen
Claudius Rod Gilfry
Gertrude Sophie Koch
Polonius Charles Workman

Le nozze di Figaro **|Mozart**
JUL 02, 07, 09, 13, 16
Conductor Rubén Dubrovsky
Stage director Josef Ernst Köpplinger
Set designer Johannes Leiacker
Costume designer Thomas Kaiser
CAST
Figaro Levente Pál / lTimos Sirlantzis
Susanna Sophie Mitterhuber
Il Conte di Almaviva Ludwig Mittelhammer / Daniel Gutmann
La Contessa di Almaviva Jennifer O'Loughlin / Ana Maria Labin
Cherubino Anna-Katharina Tonauer / Sophie Rennert

Tristan und Isolde **| Wagner**
JUL 21M, 24M, 29M
Conductor Lothar Koenigs / Juraj Valčuha
Stage director Krzysztof Warlikowski
Lighting designer Felice Ross
Costume & Set designer Małgorzata Szczęśniak
Video designer Kamil Polak
CAST
Tristan Stuart Skelton
König Marke Mika Kares / René Pape
Isolde Nina Stemme / Anja Harteros
Kurwenal Wolfgang Koch / Iain Peterson

STUTTGART

STUTTGART STATE OPERA

staatsoper-stuttgart.de

Saint François d'Assise **| Messiaen**
JUL 02, 09
Conductor Titus Engel
Stage director Anna-Sophie Mahler
Set designer Katrin Connan
CAST
Saint François Michael Mayes
L'Ange Beate Ritter
Le Lépreux Moritz Kallenberg
Frère Léon Danylo Matviienko

Il barbiere di Siviglia **| Rossini**
JUL 01, 04, 06, 10
Conductor Vlad Iftinca
Stage director Beat Fäh
Set *designer* Volker Pfüller
Costume designer Volker Pfüller
CAST
Il Conte d'Almaviva Alberto Robert / Charles Sy
Don Bartolo José Fardilha
Rosina Linsey Coppens / Diana Haller
Figaro Johannes Kammler / Björn Bürger

ITALY

MACERATA

MACERATA OPERA FESTIVAL

sferisterio.it

Carmen **| Bizet**
JUL 20, 23, 28; AUG 06
Conductor Donato Renzetti
Stage director Daniele Menghini
Set designer Davide Signorini
Costume designer Nika Campisi
CAST
Carmen Ketevan Kemoklidze
Don José Ragaa Eldin
Escamillo Fabrizio Beggi
Micaëla Roberta Mantegna
Zuniga Andrea Concetti

La traviata **| Verdi**
JUL 22, 30; AUG 05, 13
Conductor Domenico Longo
Stage director Henning Brockhaus
Set designer Josef Svoboda
Costume designer Giancarlo Colis
CAST
Violetta Valéry Nino Machaidze
Alfredo Germont Anthony Ciaramitaro
Giorgio Germont Roberto de Candia
Flora Bervoix Mariangela Marini

MARTINA FRANCA

MARTINA FRANCA FESTIVAL, PALAZZO DUALE

festivaldellavalleditria.it

Il turco in Italia **| Rossini**
JUL18, 31; AUG 04, 06
Conductor Michele Spotti
Stage director Silvia Paoli
Set designer Andrea Belli
Costume designer Valeria Donata Bettella
CAST
Don Geronio Giulio Mastrototaro
Donna Fiorilla Giuliana Gianfaldoni
Selim Adolfo Corrado
Don Narciso Manuel Amati
Prosdocimo Gurgen Baveyan

L'Adorable Bel-Bou **| Massenet**
JUL 19, 20
Conductor Francisco Manuel Soriano
Stage director Davide Garattini Raimondi
CAST Artisti dell'Accademia del Belcanto 'Rodolfo Celletti' 2023

L'Orazio **| Auletta**
JUL 22, 25
Conductor Federico Maria Sardelli
Stage director Jean Renshaw
CAST
Leandro Shira Patchornik
Giacomina Valeria La Grotta
Elisa Martina Licari
Lauretta Natalia Kawałek
Colagianni Camilo Delgado Díaz
Lamberto Matteo Loi

Il paese di campanelli **| Lombardo / Ranzato**
JUL 26, 28, 30
Conductor Fabio Luisi
Stage director Alessandro Talevi
CAST
Nella Francesca Sassu
Bombon Martina Tampakopoulos
Ethel Silvia Regazzo
Hans Paolo Fanale
La Goffe Matteo Macchioni

MILAN

TEATRO ALLA SCALA

teatroallascala.org

Macbeth **| Porpora**
JUL 04, 08
Conductor Giampaolo Bisanti
Stage director Davide Livermore
Lighting designer Antonio Castro
Costume designer Gianluca Falaschi
Set designer Giò Forma
CAST
Macbeth Luca Salsi / Amartuvshin Enkhbat
Lady Macbeth Ekaterina Semenchuk / Anna Netrebko
Banco Jongmin Park
Macduff Fabio Sartori / Giorgio Berrugi
Malcolm Jinxu Xiahou

NAPLES

TEATRO SAN CARLO

teatrosancarlo.it

La bohème **| Puccini**

JUL 01, 02M, 04-06, 07
Conductor Francesco Lanzillotta
Stage director Emma Dante
Set designer Carmine Maringola
Costume designer Vanessa Sannino
Lighting designer Cristian Zucaro
Choreographer Sandro Campagna

CAST
Mimì Diana Damrau / Selene Zanetti
Rodolfo Vittorio Grigolo / Vincenzo Costanzo
Musetta Maria Sardaryan / Laura Ulloa
Marcello Andrzej Filończyk

ROME

TEATRO DELL'OPERA

operaroma.it

La traviata **| Verdi**
JUL 21, 25, 28; AUG 02, 04, 09
Conductor Paolo Arrivabeni
Stage director Lorenzo Mariani
Set designer Alessandro Camer
Costume designer Silvia Aymonino

CAST
Violetta Valéry Francesca Dotto
Alfredo Germont Giovanni Sebastiano Sala / Alessandro Scotto di Luzio
Giorgio Germont Christopher Maltman
Marco Caria

VENICE

TEATRO LA FENICE

teatrolafenice.it

Der fliegende Holländer **| Wagner**
JUL 01M, 04
Conductor Markus Stenz
Stage director Marcin Lakomicki
Set designer Leonie Wolf
Costume designer Cristina Aceti
Lighting designer Irene Selka

CAST
Der Holländer Samuel Youn
Daland Franz-Josef Selig
Senta Anja Kampe
Erik Toby Spence
Mary Annely Peebo
Der Steuermann Leonardo Cortellazzi

VERONA

ARENA DI VERONA FESTIVAL

arena.it

Rigoletto **| Verdi**
JUL 01, 07, 20; AUG 04
Conductor Marco Armiliato

CAST
Rigoletto Roman Burdenko / Ludovic Tézier / Luca Salsi / Amartuvshin Enkhbat
Gilda Nina Minasyan / Nadine Sierra
Il Duca di Mantova Yusif Eyvazov / Juan Diego Flórez / Piotr Beczała
Sparafucile Gianluca Buratto
Maddalena Valeria Girardello

Carmen **| Bizet**
JUL 06; AUG 11, 24

Fabio Luisi conducts at the Martina Franca Festival

SYLVIA ELZAFON

Conductor Daniel Oren
Stage director & Set designer Franco Zeffirelli
Lighting designer Paolo Mazzon
Choreographer El Camborio
Costume designer Anna Anni

CAST
Carmen Clémentine Margaine
Don José Freddie De Tommaso / Piotr Beczała / Vittorio Grigolo
Escamillo Erwin Schrott / Dalibor Jenis / Gezim Myshketa / Luca Micheletti
Micaëla Mariangela Sicilia / Olga Kulchynska / Daniela Schillaci / Gilda Fiume

La traviata **| Verdi**
JUL 08, 14, 27; AUG 19, 26; SEP 09
Conductor Andrea Battistoni / Marco Armiliato
Stage director & Set designer Franco Zeffirelli
Costume designer Maurizio Millenotti
Lighting designer Paolo Mazzon

CAST
Violetta Valéry Nina Minasyan / Lisette Oropesa / Nadine Sierra / Anna Netrebko
Alfredo Germont Francesco Meli / Vittorio Grigolo / Freddie De Tommaso
Giorgio Germont Artur Rucinski / Simone Piazzola / Ludovic Tézier / Luca Salsi
Flora Bervoix Sofia Koberidze

Aida **| Verdi**
JUL 09, 16, 21, 30; AUG 02, 18, 23 (& SEP)
Conductor Marco Armiliato / Daniel Oren
Stage director, Set, Costume & Lighting designer, Choreographer Stefano Poda

CAST
Aida Anna Netrebko / Maria José Siri / Monica Conesa / Anna Pirozzi
Il Re d'Egitto Simon Lim/ Michele Pertusi / Abramo Rosalen / Romano Dal Zovo
Amneris Olesya Petrova / Clémentine Margaine / Ekaterina Semenchuk
Radamès Yusif Eyvazov / Yonghoon Lee / Gregory Kunde /Angelo Villari / Luciano Ganci

Il barbiere di Siviglia **| Rossini**
JUL 13, 22
Conductor Alessandro Bonato
Stage director Hugo De Ana
Set, Costume & Lighting designer Hugo De Ana

CAST
Il Conte d'Almaviva Antonino Siragusa / Dmitry Korchak
Don Bartolo Carlo Lepore / Alessandro Corbelli
Rosina Vasilisa Berzhanskaya / Marina Viotti
Figaro Davide Luciano / Nicola Alaimo
Don Basilio Michele Pertusi

NETHERLANDS

AMSTERDAM

DUTCH NATIONAL OPERA

operaballet.nl

Madama Butterfly **| Puccini**
JUL 13, 14
Conductor Daniele Callegari
Stage director Alex Rigola
Lighting designer Albert Faura
Costume & Set designer Mariko Mori

CAST
Cio-Cio-San Monica Zanettin
B.F. Pinkerton Vincenzo Costanzo
Suzuki Manuela Custer
Sharpless Vladimir Stojanovic

SPAIN

BARCELONA

GRAN TEATRO DEL LICEU

liceubarcelona.cat

L'incoronazione di Poppea **| Monteverdi**
JUL 10, 12, 14, 17, 19, 21
Conductor Jordi Savall / Luca Guglielmi
Stage director Calixto Bieito
Set designer Rebecca Ringst
Costume designer Ingo Krügler
Lighting designer Franck Evin
Video designer Sarah Derendinger

CAST
Poppea Julie Fuchs
Nerone David Hansen
Ottavia Magdalena Kožená
Ottone Xavier Sabata
Seneca Nahuel Di Pierro

›

GÉRARD UFÉRAS

Julie Fuchs sings Poppea in Barcelona

MADRID

TEATRO REAL
teatroreal.es

***Turandot* | Puccini**
JUL 03-08,10, 11, 13, 14, 16-22

Conductor Nicola Luisotti / Diego García Rodríguez
Stage director Robert Wilson / Nicola Panzer
Costume designer Jacques Reynaud
Lighting designer John Torres / Robert Wilson
Set designer Robert Wilson

CAST
Turandot Anna Pirozzi / Elena Pankratova / Saioa Hernández
L'Imperatore Altoum Vicenç Esteve
Timur Adam Palka / Liang Li / Fernando Radó
Calaf Jorge de León / Martin Muehle / Michael Fabiano
Liù Nadine Sierra Ruth Iniesta / Miren Urbieta-Vega

SWITZERLAND

BAGNES

VERBIER FESTIVAL
verbierfestival.com

***Wozzeck* | Berg**
JUL 27

Conductor Lahav Shani
Verbier Festival Orchestra

CAST
Wozzeck Matthias Goerne
Marie Elena Zhidkova
Mariens Knabe Adèle Charvet
Tambourmajor Michael König
Andres Gerhard Siegel
Hauptmann Sam Furness
Doktor Albert Dohmen

GENEVA

GRAND THÉÂTRE DE GENÈVE
gtg.ch

***Il campanello di notte* | Donizetti**
JUL 08, 12, 13

Conductor Franco Trinca
Stage director Francesco Bellotto

CAST
Serafina Bianca Tognocchi
Don Annibale Pistacchio Michele Govi
Spiridione Paul Belmonte
Madama Rosa Mashal Arman
Enrico Andrei Maksimov

ZURICH

ZURICH OPERA
opernhaus.ch

***Der Freichütz* | Weber**
JUL 01, 06, 09M

Conductor Axel Kober
Stage director & Set designer Herbert Fritsch
Costume designer Victoria Behr
Lighting designer Torsten König

CAST
Ottokar Leon Košavić
Kuno Michael Hauenstein
Agathe Jacquelyn Wagner
Ännchen Lydia Teuscher
Kaspar Markus Brück
Max Benjamin Bruns

***Turandot* | Puccini**
JUL 04, 08

Conductor Marc Albrecht
Stage director Sebastian Baumgarten
Set designer Thilo Reuther
Costume designer Christina Schmitt
Lighting designer Elfried Roller
Video designer Philipp Haupt

CAST
Turandot Sondra Radvanovsky
L'Imperatore Altoum Martin Zysset
Timur Wenwei Zhang
Calaf Beczała
Liù Rosa Feola

***Les Pêcheurs de perles* | Bizet**
JUL 05, 07, 09

Conductor Nicholas Carter
Stage director Jens Daniel Herzog
Set designer Mathis Neidhardt
Costume designer Sibylle Gädeke
Lighting designer Jürgen Hoffmann

CAST
Leïla Ekaterina Bakanova
Nadir Javier Camarena
Zurga Alexey Markov
Nourabad Hubert Kowalczyk

NORTH AMERICA

CANADA

QUEBEC CITY

GRAND THÉÂTRE DE QUÉBEC
grandtheatre.qc.ca

***Roméo et Juliette* | Gounod**
JUL 28, 30M; AUG 01

Conductor Laurent Campellone
Stage director, Set & Costume designer, Lighting designer Pierre-Emmanuel Rousseau

CAST
Roméo Thomas Bettinger
Juliette Hélène Carpentier
Frère Laurent Patrick Bolleire
Mercutio Christophe Gay
Gertrude Rose Naggar-Tremblay
Tybalt Loïc Félix
Benvolio Louis-Charles Gagnon

USA

CHICAGO

OPERA FESTIVAL OF CHICAGO
operafestivalchicago.org

***Assassinio nelle cathedrale* | Pizzetti**
JUL 06, 09M

Conductor Emanuele Andrizzi
Stage director Sasha Gerritson

CAST
Thomas Becket Ferruccio Furlanetto
1. Corifea Maria Kanyova
2. Corifea Anna Laurenzo
Un araldo André De Mesquita

CINCINNATI

CINCINNATI OPERA
cincinnatiopera.org

***The Knock* | Aleksandra Vrebalov**
JUL 02M, 05, 07

Conductor Stephanie Rhodes
Stage director Alison Moritz
Costume designer Trevor Bowen
Set designer James F Rotondo
Lighting designer Thomas Hase

CAST
Lt. Roberto Gonzalez Armando Contreras
Joella "Jo" Jenner Mary-Hollis Hundley
Aishah McNair Briana Elyse Hunter
Commanding Officer's Wife Stephanie Sanchez

NEW YORK

METROPOLITAN OPERA
metopera.org

***Der fliegende Holländer* | Wagner**
JUN 03, 07, 10

Conductor Thomas Guggeis
Stage director François Girard
Set designer John Macfarlane
Costume designer Moritz Junge
Lighting designer David Finn
Video designer Peter Flaherty
Choreographer Carolyn Choa

CAST
Der Holländer Tomasz Konieczny
Daland Dmitry Belosselskiy
Senta Elza van den Heever
Erik Eric Cutler

***Die Zauberflöte* | Mozart**
JUN 03, 06, 08, 10

Conductor Nathalie Stutzmann / Gareth Morrell
Stage director & Choreographer Simon McBurney
Set designer Michael Levine
Costume designer Nicky Gillibrand
Lighting designer Jean Kalman

CAST
Tamino Lawrence Brownlee
Papageno Thomas Oliemans

Pamina Erin Morley
Königin der Nacht Kathryn Lewek
Sarastro Stephen Milling

SARATOGA OPERA FESTIVAL

operasaratoga.org

Don Pasquale **| Donizetti**
JUL 01, 07, 09M
Conductor Brian Garman / Noah Palmer
Stage director Meaghan Deiter
Choreographer Gustavo Zajac

CAST
Norina Haley Whitney
Don Pasquale Andy Papas
Ernesto Randy Ho
Dottor Malatesta Antonio Cruz
Carlino/Un notaro Alexander Smith

A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder **| Steven Lutvak**
JUL 02M, 06 08
Conductor Laura Bergquist
Stage director David Gram

CAST
The D'ysquith Family Eric McConnell
Miss Shingle Maria De Conzo
Phoebe D'Ysquith Megan Fleischmann
Sibella Hallward Claire McCahan

SAN DIEGO

OPERA NEO FESTIVAL

operaneo.com

Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno **| Handel**
JUL 08, 09M
Conductor Jory Vinikour
Stage director Sydney Roslin

CAST
Bellezza Ashley Fabian
Piacere Stephanie Doche
Disinganno Lauren Randolph
Tempo Brian Skoog

Mitridate, re di Ponto **| Mozart**
JUL 14, 15
Conductor / Stage director Péter Kozma

CAST
Mitridate Charles Calotta
Aspasia Oznur Tuluglu
Sifare Sara Womble
Farnace Keith Wehmeier
Ismene Emily Helenbrook

SAN FRANCISCO

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

sfopera.com

The Rape of Lucretia **| Britten**
JUL 13, 15M
Conductor Judith Yan
Stage director Jan Eßinger

CAST
Male Chorus Chance Jonas-O'Toole
Female Chorus Caroline Corrales
Junius Finn Sagal
Tarquinius Samson McCrady
Lucretia Natalie Lewis
Bianca Simona Genga
Lucia Olivia Prendergast

SOUTH AMERICA

CHILE

SANTIAGO

ÓPERA NACIONAL DE CHILE

municipal.cl

Carmen **| Bizet**
JUL 01M, 03-06, 08M, 11, 12
Conductor Roberto Rizzi Brignoli
Stage director Rodrigo Navarrete
Set & Lighting designer Ramón López
Costume designer Loreto Monsalve

CAST
Carmen Natalia Kutateladze / Evelyn Ramírez
Don José Galeano Salas / Andrés Presno
Escamillo Artur Janda / Javier Weibel
Micaëla Alexandra Razskazoff / Paulina González

ASIA PACIFIC

AUSTRALIA

SYDNEY

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

sydneyoperahouse.com

Aida **| Verdi**
JUL 01, 04, 06, 08, 10, 12, 15M, 17, 19, 21
Conductor Lorenzo Passerini / Tahu Matheson
Stage director Davide Livermore / Shaun Rennie
Set designer Giò Forma
Costume designer Gianluca Falaschi
Lighting designer John Rayment

CAST
Aida Leah Crocetto / Natalie Aroyan
Il Re d'Egitto David Parkin
Amneris Elena Gabouri / Agnieszka Rehlis
Radamès Najmiddin Mavlyanov / Diego Torre
Amonasro Warwick Olney Fyfe / Michael Honeyman
Ramfis Roberto Scandiuzzi

Les contes d'Hoffmann **| Offenbach**
JUL 11, 13, 15, 18, 20, 22M
Conductor Guillaume Tourniaire
Stage director Damiano Michieletto
Set designer Paulo Fantin
Costume designer Carla Teti
Lighting designer Alessandro Carletti

CAST
Hoffmann Iván Guillermo Ayón Rivas
Olympia / Antonia /Giulietta / Stella Jessica Pratt
Coppelius/Dapertutto/Dr Miracle/Lindorf Marko Mimica

JAPAN

TOKYO

NEW NATIONAL THEATRE TOKYO

nntt.jac.go.jp

JUL 02, 05, 08
Conductor Kazushi Ono
Stage director Aguni Jun
Set designer Pasquale Grossi
Costume designer Alessandro Ciammarughi
Lighting designer Toshiyuki Kasahara

CAST
Mimì Alessandra Marianelli
Rodolfo Stephen Costello
Musetta Valentina Mastrangelo
Marcello Sudo Shingo

La traviata **| Verdi**
JUL 12, 15M, 16M, 17M
Conductor Alexander Soddy
Stage director Yasuko Sawada
Set designer Rumi Matsui
Costume designer Ayako Maeda
Lighting designer Takashi Kitamura

CAST
Violetta Valéry Megumi Tanihara / Noriko Tanetani
Alfredo Germont Kota Murakami / Kohei Yamamoto
Giorgio Germont Shunsuke Imai / Kuroda Hiroshi
Flora Bervoix Eiko Koizumi / Akiko Gôke

Answers to *Opera Now*'s Quiz (p74)

1 Charlie Chan (actor Warner Oland) – *Charlie Chan at the Opera*, 1936

2 A pin

3 Calabria, (near Montalto, where Leoncavallo grew up)

4 Five times

5 Augusta Holmès, with *La Montagne noire*

6 Pier Paolo Pasolini

7 Dana International won Eurovision 1998 with 'Diva', the chorus being 'Viva la diva'; Donizetti composed *Viva la Diva* (or *Mamma*) in 1831

8 Sydney Opera House – it was a government decision

9 Sydney Opera House – they are the tiles on the above-mentioned sails

10 Théâtre de la Monnaie, Brussels; bodystocking provided!

11 Titta Ruffo

12 Maria Malibran, 1808-36

13 Cecilia Gasdia, now GM and Artistic Director at the Arena di Verona Festival

14 A moot point, as it's from *Salammb* which is the fictional opera composed by Herrmann for Welles's film *Citizen Kane*

15 The Hungarian State Opera House, Budapest – the opera is Erkel's *Bánk Bán*, the aria is 'My homeland, my homeland'

16 Dame Nellie Melba's. It remained unsold; you are still in with a chance!

17 Mary, Queen of Scots to Elizabeth I (*Maria Stuarda*, Donizetti)

18 *Il viaggio a Reims*, Rossini

19 Irina Arkhipova

20
- The Staatskapelle Weimar, Germany
- Book of Judges, Chapter 16
- The Lord Chamberlain wouldn't allow the staging of a Biblical work
- Dagon
- 'Softly awakes my heart'

Back Stage | Quiz

The *Opera Now* Quiz

Do you know your Puccini from your Ponchielli? Test your wits in this month's set of fiendish questions for the dedicated opera buff (with a clue or two in the pictures)

1 Who went to London, Paris, Egypt, Shanghai, Broadway, Honolulu, the circus, the racetrack and the opera?
2 In Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, what item is Barbarina searching for in Act IV?
3 Where is Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* set?
4 How many times does Tosca sing 'Mario' offstage before she first appears in Act I of *Tosca*?
5 Which woman surmounted a mountain when her opera was premiered at the Paris Opéra in 1895?
6 Who directed Callas in the 1969 film *Medea*?
7 What links Dana International to Donizetti?
8 On 6th May, which opera house controversially failed to illuminate its sails in honour of Charles III's coronation?
9 The chevron tiles on which iconic opera house offered an engineering challenge solved by the equation $L_n=2n-3$?
10 Which opera house recently put out a call for 100 volunteers to appear naked in a production of *Das Rheingold* later this year? You can be between 16 and 80, and will 'have to roll and crawl on stage'.
11 Who was the great baritone known as La Voce del Leone?
12 Which legendary nineteenth century soprano has been portrayed on film by sopranos Maria Cebotari (in 1943), Géori Boué (1944) and María de los Ángeles Morales (1951), as well as transgender icon and Velvet Underground muse Candy Darling (1972)?
13 Italian soprano Anastasia Bartoli is the daughter of which famous opera singer?
14 'Ah, cruel, tu m'as trop entendue' is an aria from which opera?
15 The tenor sings the aria 'Hazám, hazám' and the local audience in the national opera house applauds with fervour – where am I?
16 Whose Cartier diamond and pearl devant-de-corsage was up for auction at Christie's Geneva in May; estimate CHF2,500,000 to CHF3,500,000?
17 Who spits out the line 'figlia impura di Bolena' and who is she insulting?
18 Which opera features 'God Save the King', the tune of 'Deutschlandlied' and some Tyrolean yodeling?
19 Who made a very belated Met debut aged 72 as Filipyevna in *Eugene Onegin* in 1997
20 How well do you know Saint-Saëns *Samson et Dalila*?
- Where was the opera premiered in 1877?
- The story is taken from which book of the Old Testament?
- The High Priest worships which god?
- What is the common English title of Dalila's aria 'Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix'?

Compiled by Francis Muzzu. Turn to page 63 for answers

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My *favourite* things

ANNABEL ARDEN

SHEILA BURNETT-ANNABEL

Annabel Arden's multifaceted career spans the worlds of opera, theatre, broadcasting and acting. We catch up with her ahead of directing Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* at the Glyndebourne Festival

Favourite time of day?
Early morning. Nobody else is around. Doesn't really fit in with being an opera director, because you're always in the theatre until 11 doing the lighting.

Favourite season?
Either spring or autumn. I don't like the heat. I burn and I just don't function very well.

Favourite colour?
I wear lots of green.

Favourite artist?
I look at so much art, and so my favourite is the last exhibition I've seen. Louise Bourgeois, Turner, and Manet would be very high on the list. I like the small, strange, dark Manets. What I love about him is the quality of the pigment and dark backgrounds behind a lot of blackness. I find that very exciting. I love Cézanne as well. Colour depth, that's what really excites me.

Favourite building?
I'm not very fond of buildings. I didn't have a house until I was about 35. I would rather be outside... I'm not interested in the aesthetics of buildings unless they really take the attention away from themselves. The only buildings I'm interested in are very modern and completely self-sufficient, and work for people, energy and are calm. There's a very beautiful house in Suffolk, Pavilion House, fantastically simply designed, totally energy-sufficient and self-sufficient. It's Danish in design, so it's clean and empty.

ADOBE STOCK/ KAVALENKAVA

Favourite animal?
Dog. They're very important and sort of mythical. And the toad who has a magical stone in its eyes. It's a creature of great wisdom, and they're so vulnerable and beautiful.

Favourite well-being secret?
I'm great swimmer, and I'm learning to teach the Feldenkrais method. Moshé Feldenkrais was the man who invented it and it's absolutely revelatory.

Favourite possession?
I'm not very good with this sort of thing. I do possess an alabaster disc, which is made by the sculptor Emily Young. It's a thin disc of the most wonderful alabaster, about the size of a small dinner plate and if you shine a light through it, it looks like the moon.

ADOBE STOCK/ KRISSIKUNTERBUNT

ADOBE STOCK/A. KAZAK

ADOBE STOCK/DONNA WHITE

Favourite drink?

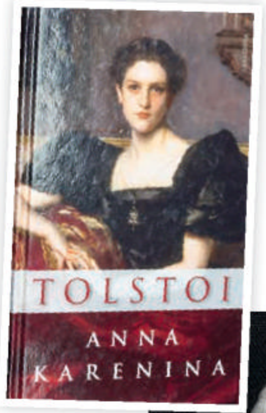
I'm a great drinker of fizzy water. And very good champagne.

Favourite food?

I've always loved cheese. My father used to make the most wonderful cheese on toast.

Favourite restaurant?

A very nostalgic restaurant experience for me would be the Brasserie du Nord, which is opposite the Gare du Nord in Paris. It's a great classic, open 24/7 and you order oysters and Riesling…



Favourite TV?

I had a lot of fun with *The White Lotus*. And a very clever, long-running American TV series is *Schitt's Creek*. I only watch TV for crap but it's got to be really good crap.

Favourite film?

I would have to say *Rashomon* by Kurosawa. It's a great Japanese film about a murder, which is told from three different angles, you never really can decide who did it. And Kurosawa is one of the greatest Japanese filmmakers of all time, really. And the great movie *Dog Day Afternoon*.

Favourite book/author?

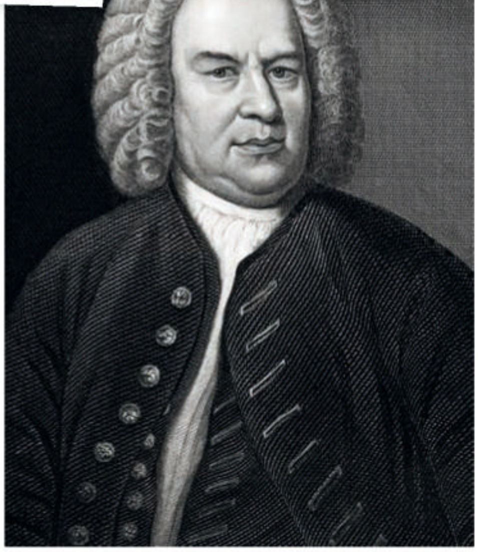
Sections of *Middlemarch*, and I just recently reread *Anna Karenina*. There are three women who I go back to again and again: Rosamond Lehmann, Jane Gardam, a great writer, much undervalued, and a contemporary writer, Deborah Levy.

Favourite composer?

Johann Sebastian Bach. I'd sacrifice everything if I could keep him.

Favourite city?

I've just fallen in love with Copenhagen. It's cosmopolitan, it's cultured, it's got lots of water, it's calm with wonderful churches, and beautiful spaces, and everybody seems well. They're funny, happy and they're sensible…


ADOBE STOCK/GEORGIOS KOLLIDAS

Favourite holiday destination?

I like it to be remote. A beach in Suffolk, or the very north of Portugal. Not a hot beach. The north of Scotland, or the Åland Islands, which is an archipelago in the middle of the Gulf of Finland. I like windy beaches.

Favourite sport?

I've never played any sport, but I do think cricket is wonderful to watch. I have a cricketing son, so I like watching him.

Favourite theatre?

It's hard to beat the Palais Garnier in Paris. I like very beautiful little opera houses. In Padua in Italy there's the most perfect little theatre that was built in something like 1795, just before the French Revolution. It's made entirely of wood. The auditorium at Glyndebourne is pretty great.

There's a perfect jewel in Montpellier as well. And the great pub theatres in London, the Finborough, or the Gate, or the old Arcola. Little French theatres, I love those.

Favourite item of clothing?

I've got a new red sweater, which I just love. It's just a woollen sweater with a high roll neck, and pockets, and it's not fluffy.

Your plans for the month of July?

L'elisir d'amore at Glyndebourne. **ON**

Interview by Louise Flind

The *Opera Now* Quiz

Do you know your Puccini from your Ponchielli?
Test your wits in this month's set of fiendish questions for the dedicated opera buff (with a clue or two in the pictures)

1 Who went to London, Paris, Egypt, Shanghai, Broadway, Honolulu, the circus, the racetrack and the opera?

2 In Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, what item is Barbarina searching for in Act IV?

3 Where is Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* set?

4 How many times does Tosca sing 'Mario' offstage before she first appears in Act I of *Tosca*?

5 Which woman surmounted a mountain when her opera was premiered at the Paris Opéra in 1895?

6 Who directed Callas in the 1969 film *Medea*?

7 What links Dana International to Donizetti?

8 On 6th May, which opera house controversially failed to illuminate its sails in honour of Charles III's coronation?

9 The chevron tiles on which iconic opera house offered an engineering challenge solved by the equation $L_n=2n-3$?

10 Which opera house recently put out a call for 100 volunteers to appear naked in a production of *Das Rheingold* later this year? You can be between 16 and 80, and will 'have to roll and crawl on stage'.

11 Who was the great baritone known as La Voce del Leone?

12 Which legendary nineteenth century soprano has been portrayed on film by sopranos Maria Cebotari (in 1943), Géori Boué (1944) and María de los Ángeles Morales (1951), as well as transgender icon and Velvet Underground muse Candy Darling (1972)?

13 Italian soprano Anastasia Bartoli is the daughter of which famous opera singer?

14 'Ah, cruel, tu m'as trop entendue' is an aria from which opera?

15 The tenor sings the aria 'Hazám, hazám' and the local audience in the national opera house applauds with fervour – where am I?

16 Whose Cartier diamond and pearl devant-de-corsage was up for auction at Christie's Geneva in May; estimate CHF2,500,000 to CHF3,500,000?

17 Who spits out the line 'figlia impura di Bolena' and who is she insulting?

18 Which opera features 'God Save the King', the tune of 'Deutschlandlied' and some Tyrolean yodeling?

19 Who made a very belated Met debut aged 72 as Filipyevna in *Eugene Onegin* in 1997

20 How well do you know Saint-Saëns *Samson et Dalila*?

- Where was the opera premiered in 1877?
- The story is taken from which book of the Old Testament?
- The High Priest worships which god?
- What is the common English title of Dalila's aria 'Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix'?

ALL ADOBE STOCK

Compiled by Francis Muzzu. Turn to page 63 for answers

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Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

–

AGRIPPINA
Georg Friedrich Händel

–

LA TRAVIATA
Giuseppe Verdi

–

OEDIPUS REX / ANTIGONE
Igor Stravinsky / Samy Moussa

–

THE SHELL TRAIL
Ellen Reid

–

ROBERTO DEVEREUX
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Don Carlos
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musical direction
Marc Minkowski
stage direction
Lydia Steier

Ariodante
George Frideric Handel
5 October 2023
musical direction
William Christie
with Les Arts Florissants

María de Buenos Aires
Opera-tango
by Ástor Piazzolla
27 October — 5 November 2023
musical direction
Facundo Agudin
stage direction
Daniele Finzi Pasca

Der Rosenkavalier
Richard Strauss
13 — 26 December 2023
musical direction
Jonathan Nott
stage direction
Christoph Waltz

Justice
Hèctor Parra
22 — 28 January 2024
musical direction
Titus Engel
stage direction
Milo Rau

Idomeneo, re di Creta
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
21 February — 2 March 2024
musical direction
Leonardo García Alarcón
stage direction / choreography
Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

Saint François d'Assise
Olivier Messiaen
11 — 18 April 2024
musical direction
Jonathan Nott
stage direction
Adel Abdessemed

Roberto Devereux
Gaetano Donizetti
31 May — 30 June 2024
musical direction
Stefano Montanari
stage direction
Mariame Clément

The Tudor Trilogy
Gaetano Donizetti
18 — 30 June 2024
musical direction
Stefano Montanari
stage direction
Mariame Clément

RECITAL & CONCERT

Lawrence Brownlee & Levy Sekgapane
20 September 2023

Matthias Goerne
15 October 2023

Sandrine Piau
1 March 2024

Roberto Alagna & Aleksandra Kurzak
26 May 2024

New Year Concert
with Simon Keenlyside
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